



**SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVER MISSION
TO THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

LAUNCH STATEMENT

BY

**HON. MINISTER NKOANA-MASHABANE MINISTER OF
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION OF THE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

AND

HEAD OF SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVER MISSION

TO THE

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA GENERAL ELECTIONS, TO BE HELD

ON HELD 28 NOVEMBER 2014

**DELIVERED ON 10 NOVEMBER 2014 AT SAFARI COURT
HOTEL
WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA**

- Dr. Thembinkosi Mhlongo, SADC Deputy Executive Secretary for Regional Integration;
- Chair of Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) and all the Electoral Commissioners here present;
- Representatives of the Namibia Government;
- Esteemed Leaders of the Political Parties;
- Religious Leaders;
- Members of Civil Society;
- Your Excellencies High Commissioners and Ambassadors accredited to the Republic of Namibia;
- Esteemed Members of the various Observer Missions;
- Members of the Media;
- Distinguished Guests;
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the Chair of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security, H.E Jacob G Zuma, I warmly welcome you all to this, the launch of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to the 2014 General Elections in the Republic of Namibia.

As I welcome you, I also wish to take this opportunity, to thank you for honouring our invitation to this launch. I equally wish to express our gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Namibia and the Electoral Commission of Namibia for inviting SADC to observe the democratic elections in our sisterly country.

The Republic of Namibia is a young and vibrant democracy. This, the 5th national democratic elections since independence in 1990 is

significant and bears testament to a consistent democratic practice by way of holding regular elections.

The people of Namibia have shown commitment to a multiparty democracy, and elections are an important exercise in pluralism and are an essential element in the democratic process. The holding of regular free and fair elections are one of the most important indicators that gauge the quality of democracy and need to be satisfied in order to achieve consolidation.

The electoral process is fundamental to any competitive democracy as it allows eligible voters to express their political will and choice. The upcoming electoral process therefore capacitates and enables the voters to own and identify with a democratic political system, its structures and institutions.

The SEOM is in Namibia to witness the election and we believe that the people of Namibia as has been the case in the past, will successfully undertake this electoral process. We have taken note of the recently approved Constitutional amendments and the new Electoral Act which will govern the elections on 28 November 2014.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

The SEOM engagements and observation process is guided first and foremost by the Constitution of a country holding an election and the Electoral Laws of that country and secondly by regional

legal provisions and frameworks as well as international norms to ensure democracy and good governance in a Member States.

The region's governance aspirations are prescribed in Article 4 of the SADC Treaty that commits Member States to ensure the observance of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Furthermore, Article 5 of the Treaty commits Member States to "promote common political values, systems and other shared values which are transmitted through institutions, which are democratic, legitimate, and effective."

Additionally, the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, forms part of the integral legal parameters of our observation processes, the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections being the regional benchmark that embody the aspirations, norms, and values of Member States.

With the launch of the mission I can also confirm the SADC Team's commitment to ensure that the mission is up to the task and observe adherence to the legal framework of Namibia as well as the election principles and guidelines of SADC. As a region, Member States subscribe to the commitment to consolidate and entrench democracy and good governance so as to maintain democracy, peace, security, and stability in the individual Member States and the region as a whole.

In line with the mission's Terms of Reference, being the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, elections add value to democracy as it is an inclusive and

participatory process that accords the legitimacy to govern, and furthers peace and stability.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

At this stage, the mission seeks to encourage the electoral stakeholders to this election to ensure that the electoral process serves the people of Namibia with provisions responding to the facilitation of fundamental human rights and freedoms as enshrined in the Constitution, the promotion of equality, mutual security, and respect for human dignity.

The SADC Electoral Observation Mission to Namibia was preceded by an assessment mission by the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC), as is the practice. Their report provides valuable information which will guide us in our work going forward. We are also pleased that two representatives from SEAC will support the work of the Head of Mission Team.

The SADC mission will broadly gauge the elections against criteria to assess the following as espoused in the SADC principles and guidelines;

1. Full participation of the citizens in the political process;
2. Regular intervals for elections as provided for by the respective National Constitution;
3. Equal opportunity for all political parties to access the state media;

4. Independence of the Judiciary and impartiality of the electoral institutions; and
5. Acceptance and respect of the election results by political parties of the results as proclaimed to have been free and fair by the competent National Electoral Authorities in accordance with the law of the land.

Furthermore, as part of its Terms of Reference, the SEOM's scope of observation will be informed by the following guidelines that guarantee conducive environment for free, fair and peaceful elections:

- a) constitutional and legal guarantees of freedom and rights of the citizens,
- b) voters' registration process;
- c) existence of an updated and accessible voters roll;
- d) location of polling stations in neutral places; and
- e) timeous announcement of the election date,

SADC will deploy a sizable number of observers to all the regions of the Republic of Namibia. The deployment of the SEOM is in part to facilitate learning and the development of regional democratic norms and values and best practices.

Notwithstanding the fact that elections are a competitive activity, SADC encourages the people of Namibia and the political and electoral stakeholders to exercise political tolerance.

In conclusion, I wish to invite you to join us on 30 November 2014, at this venue where the SADC Preliminary Statement on the electoral process will be presented.

SADC through the SEOM reaffirms its commitment and support to the people of Namibia and will work towards ensuring the smooth electoral process.

I further wish to take this opportunity to wish the people of Namibia a successful election.

On behalf of the Chair of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security, H.E Jacob G. Zuma, I declare the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to the Republic of Namibia officially launched.

Thank you very much.