



**LAUNCH STATEMENT BY
THE HON M NKOANA-MASHABANE,
MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND
COOPERATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
AND
HEAD OF THE SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVER
MISSION TO THE 2014 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN THE
REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

10 OCTOBER 2014

**FAIRGROUND
GABORONE
BOTSWANA**

**Your Excellency Dr Stergomena Lawrence Tax, SADC Executive Secretary;
Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission of Botswana, and all
the Electoral Commissioners present;
Representatives of the Government;
Leaders of Political Parties;
All Members of Civil Society;
Your Excellencies High Commissioners and Ambassadors accredited to the
Republic of Botswana;
Election Observers;
Members of the Media;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Our presence here today responds to the invitation extended by His Excellency Lt Gen Seretse Khama Ian Khama, President of the Republic of Botswana, for SADC to deploy an Observer Mission to the General Elections that will take place on the 24th of October. As you are aware, election observation has become a norm in our region, and is very much in keeping with the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

On behalf of the Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, H.E Jacob G Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, I take this opportunity to welcome you all to the launch of this Election Observer Mission (SEOM).

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Republic of Botswana is one of the oldest democracies in our region, holding its first multiparty elections in 1965 ahead of the declaration of independence. This, the 11th democratic election in Botswana, is a testimony to the strides that we have made in our region towards the consolidation of democracy and the promotion of good governance.

The previous SEOM to Botswana in 2009 found that the elections had been held in a manner that was open and transparent, and the upcoming elections attest to this country's track record of upholding democratic principles and being committed to good governance.

In Botswana, our oldest democracy in SADC, we will be able to observe practices honed and developed over decades of democracy. We would like to congratulate Botswana on its track record to date and its valued contribution to building democratic institutions in the region. We trust that the elections on 24 October 2014 will continue to build on this proud tradition.

Our regional body recognises that in a democracy, elections are part of a process rather than being an end in themselves, and that through them, governments constantly seek mandates from their citizens, as they strive to make policies aimed at the betterment of their lives.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Articles 4 and 5 of the SADC Treaty enjoin Member States to ensure the observance of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and to "promote common political values, systems and other shared values which are transmitted through institutions, which are democratic, legitimate, and effective".

While this SEOM is guided by the Constitution and the Electoral Laws of Botswana, and is underpinned by our Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections. They are our regional benchmark, and embody the aspirations, norms and values of Member States.

It is against this background that H.E President Jacob G. Zuma, the Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation, has constituted this SEOM to Botswana, that I have been tasked to lead.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Following the launch of the SEOM, members of the Organ Troika will engage with the leadership of Botswana as well as the Chairperson of the IEC to be appraised of preparations for the elections.

It is our expectation that all leaders of this country will, as usual, continue to work together in Botswana's national interest.

Ladies and gentlemen,

SADC will deploy more than 70 Observers across the various districts.

They are expected to consider the general conduct of the elections against the following principles:

- Full participation of citizens in the political process;
- Freedom of association;
- Political tolerance;
- Equal opportunity for all political parties to access the state media;
- Equal opportunity to exercise the right to vote and be voted for;
- Independence of the Judiciary and impartiality of the electoral institutions;
- Voter education.
- 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.
- Any challenge of the election results to be conducted as provided for in the law of the land.

Furthermore, as part of its Terms of Reference, the SEOM's assessment will be informed by the following guidelines conducive to an environment for free, fair and peaceful elections:

- constitutional and legal guarantees of freedom and rights of the citizens,
- voters' registration process;
- existence of an updated and accessible voters roll;
- location of polling stations in neutral places; and
- timely announcement of the election date

The presence and deployment of the SEOM helps to enhance the credibility of the electoral process, and encourages the development of a culture of democratic norms and values in the region.

The SADC Electoral Observation Mission has a responsibility given that we are representatives of this region and we will be deployed across Botswana. We need to share information and our Preliminary Report with the African Union Observer Team who will be deployed. We are aware that other organisations will be sending Observer Mission who we will also work with.

SADC is expected to release its preliminary findings on the electoral process on 26 October 2014, and takes this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment and support to the people of Botswana, and to wish them a successful election.

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

Kealeboga,

Thank you very much.