



LAUNCH STATEMENT

BY

**HIS LORDSHIP, HON. JUSTICE ERNEST LINESI
SAKALA, FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE
REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA**

AND

**HEAD OF THE SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION
(SEOM)**

TO

**THE 2018 PRESIDENTIAL, LEGISLATIVE AND PROVINCIAL
ELECTIONS**

IN

THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

KINSHASA, 10 DECEMBER 2018

- Distinguished Members of the SADC Organ Troika;
- Your Excellency, Dr. Stergomena Lawrence-Tax, SADC Executive Secretary
- The Chairperson of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI);
- Members of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI);
- Distinguished Members of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC);
- Representatives of Political Parties;
- Heads and representatives of Diplomatic Missions;
- Heads and representatives of International and Regional Organisations
- Heads and representatives of Electoral Observer Missions
- Representatives of Religious organisations and the Civil Society;
- Election Observers;
- Partners from the media;
- Ladies and gentlemen.

It is my singular honour and privilege to represent His Excellency Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia, and the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, at the launch of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to observe the Presidential, Legislative and Provincial Elections scheduled for 23rd December, 2018.

Our Mission in this country derives its mandate from the *SADC Treaty; the SADC Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation* and the *Revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections*.

The Principles and Guidelines are informed by key instruments of the African Union, such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, as well as relevant Conventions of the United Nations. All SADC Member States affirmed their commitment to the implementation of the SADC Principles and Guidelines. In addition, our Mission is guided by the Constitution and subsidiary electoral laws of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Distinguished Guests,

In line with these regional and national frameworks, the SADC Electoral Observation Mission will assess the conduct of the

elections against a set of central principles stipulated in the revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections such as:

- The full participation of the citizens in the political process;
- Freedom of association, assembly and expression;
- Equal opportunity for all political parties to access the State Media;
- Civic and Voter education;
- Acceptance of and respect for the official election results by political parties; and
- Settlement of electoral disputes as provided for in the Law.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our Mission was preceded by the deployment of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) to this country in July and November, 2018. The SEAC was to inform the Ministerial Committee of the Organ (MCO) on the appropriate action to be taken in support of the electoral process.

The SEAC interacted with various Congolese Stakeholders and noted their concerns, particularly issues relating to:

- the introduction and use of the Electronic Voting Machine;

- the urgent need to remove from the voters' roll, approximately 6 million voters who were registered without biometrical data;
- the insufficient Voters Education intervention as a result of limited financial resources at the disposal of civic education organisations and CENI;
- the presence of armed insurgents in the eastern part of the country, particularly in Beni, and;
- the outbreak of the Ebola Virus in Ituri and North Kivu Provinces.

The SEAC Mission also noted the challenges faced by the Ebola response teams in Beni and Butembo. It further acknowledged the United Nations Security Council resolution of 30th October, 2018 calling for the immediate cessation of hostilities by all armed groups operating in these areas.

Distinguished Guests,

Since the DRC joined SADC in 1998, SADC has, in collaboration with the DRC Government and other stakeholders, undertaken initiatives aimed at providing long-lasting solutions to the security and development challenges facing the country. These initiatives have included military support, mediation and preventative diplomacy, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

In this regard, SADC has deployed troops to Eastern DRC under the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB), which operates under the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Congo (MONUSCO), with the specific aim of neutralising the negative forces in that part of the country.

Apart from the FIB, SADC opened its Liaison Office in Kinshasa in April, 2018 to provide an avenue for closer collaboration with Congolese stakeholders. Through this office, SADC offers support to the DRC to attain sustainable peace, political stability and socio-economic development.

The SADC Liaison Office coordinates ongoing political, electoral and security support initiatives in the country. It has also enabled SADC to identify specific areas of the electoral processes where SADC support is required in conjunction with the DRC Government, and other stakeholders.

Distinguished Guests,

The SADC Observation Mission, which I am privileged to launch today, consists of 94 members. 73 of these are field observers supported by a Core Team of 18 technical staff from the SADC Secretariat and 3 SEAC Members. The Observers are drawn from 8 SADC Member States, namely Angola,

Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The Mission, which arrived in Kinshasa on 4th December, will remain on the ground until 5th January 2019 and will deploy to 16 of the 26 Provinces.

Distinguished Guests,

On behalf of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission, I wish to appeal to all stakeholders in this great country to ensure that these Elections are managed in a peaceful, transparent and credible manner. In the same vein, I also encourage all the eligible voters to brave the weather and turn out in large numbers on the polling day to exercise their democratic right to vote.

As SADC, we look forward to an electoral process that adheres to democratic values and principles as envisioned in our SADC Treaty, the Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, and the revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would be failing in my duties if I do not recognise the tremendous support rendered by the Congolese Government and international partners to address the Ebola outbreak and

security challenges affecting some parts of Eastern DRC. I also wish to acknowledge the support offered by various stakeholders to the electoral process.

Lastly, may I take this opportunity to invite you all to attend the ceremony for the release of our Preliminary Statement regarding our observations of the 2018 Presidential, Legislative and Provincial Elections, scheduled to take place on 26 December 2018. You are all welcome at this same venue.

**Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am now delighted and honoured, on behalf of the Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, His Excellency Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia, to declare the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to the 2018 Presidential, Legislative and Provincial Elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo, officially launched.

Thank you very much
Merci beaucoup

Muito Obrigado

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