



**SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION (SEOM) TO
THE REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES**

**PRELIMINARY
STATEMENT**

BY

HONOURABLE NYELETI BROOKE MONDLANE

DEPUTY MINISTER OF

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND CO-OPERATION

OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOZAMBIQUE,

AND HEAD OF THE SEOM

TOTHE 2015 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

IN THE

REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES

Delivered on 20 December 2015

Victoria, Avani Hotel

Honourable Hendrick Gappy, Chairperson of the Electoral Commission of Seychelles;

Leaders and Representatives of Political Parties;

Fellow Heads of International Electoral Observer Missions;

Your Excellencies, Heads and Representatives of the Diplomatic Missions accredited to the Republic of Seychelles;

Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Members of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council;

International Observers;

Representatives of Local Election Observers, Religious Leaders and Representatives of Civil Society;

Members of the Media;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my privilege to welcome you to this occasion of the presentation of the Preliminary Findings of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM), on the 2015 Presidential Election which took place from the 3rd to the 5th of December 2015. Thank you for your presence.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Electoral Commission of Seychelles (ECS), established under the Elections (Amendment), Act 27 of 2014, invited SADC to observe the Seychelles Presidential Elections.

In accordance with the established practice to observe elections in SADC Member States, His Excellency Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique and Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation constituted the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM).

The Chairperson appointed me, in my capacity as the Deputy-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Mozambique to lead the SEOM to the Republic of Seychelles.

Electoral observation within our region has been a standing practice of SADC Member States.

This has enabled us to deepen democracy through the participation of citizens in political and decision-making processes.

The SEOM encourages and pursues the adherence to the revised *SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections*, thus enhancing transparency and credibility of the electoral processes in the SADC Region.

The revised guidelines and principles include among others to encourage the full participation of eligible citizens in the electoral processes, so that all citizens enjoy fundamental freedoms and human rights, including freedom of association, assembly and expression, whilst promoting the values of electoral justice which include integrity, impartiality, fairness, professionalism, efficiency and regulatory of elections.

The SADC guidelines also call for freedom of the media, access of information by all citizens and equal opportunities for all candidates and political parties to use the media, including the state media.

We are guided towards the principle of impartiality and independence of the Judiciary, the Electoral Management Body (EMB) and all other election institutions and endeavour that voter education capacitates and empowers all eligible citizens, as well as fostering ownership of the electoral process and the democratic political system and finally seek to ascertain that during electoral processes the Electoral Code of Conduct is duly observed.

**Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The SEOM deployment was preceded by the Goodwill Assessment Mission of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) and the Secretariat undertaken from 11 to 14 November 2015 with the purpose to assess the level of preparedness of Seychelles to hold the Presidential Election. The conclusion of this Mission was that the political atmosphere, organization of Electoral Commission, stakeholders were generally conducive for holding elections.

The SEOM was officially launched on Friday, 27 November 2015, after which the deployment was activated on 28 November 2015 with the strength of 42 observers comprising of 8 teams deployed at both SEOM headquarters and 20 of 25 electoral districts in Seychelles main and inner islands.

As indicated in our interim statement of 07 December 2015, SEOM congratulates the People of the Seychelles for the organized and peaceful manner in which the first round took place. Since no candidate attained 50% plus one vote in the first round as required by the Election Act, the Electoral Commission announced 16 to 18 December as the date for the second round of the Presidential Election. Following this, the SEOM remained in the country to continue with the Observation Mission, although with a smaller contingency of observers. The observation mission comprised of five teams deployed to all the electoral districts as occurred in the first round of the election.

Prior to the second round of the Presidential Election, the SEOM again met with the Electoral Commission, Leaders of Political Parties, the Police, representatives of the Civil Society and local and international observation missions.

These engagements provided the opportunity for the SEOM to learn and share notes about the views and concerns of various stakeholders

**Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The SEOM observed that both the Pre-Election phase for the second rounds were characterised a mostly calm and peaceful political atmosphere.

The SEOM observed that further noted that public political campaigns ended 24 hours prior to the elections.

On the 2nd round of Election Days, the SEOM observed the following:

- Polling stations opened on time and the opening procedures were followed in accordance with the provisions of the Elections Act;
- Presiding and Electoral Officers, Party agents, international and local observers and police officers were present during the opening of polling stations;
- The layout of most polling stations promoted easy flow in the voting process;
- All voters who produced ID's, Passports and other relevant documents were able to vote if duly registered;
- The Electoral Commission took due notice of the advice provided by the stakeholders regarding ways to expedite the voting process significantly, reducing the time in which citizens were required to stand in queues;
- Polling stations opened and closed on time. Voters who were still in queues at the formal closing of the polling stations were allowed to cast their votes;
- There were no incidents of violence reported by the SEOM Observers;
- Counting at most polling stations started immediately after closing and the prescribed procedures were adhered to by the Returning Officers;
- The Designated Electoral Officers transmitted the statements of the results to the Electoral Commission and the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission announced the results as required by the Act.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

During the observation process and given the fact that a new Electoral Act was for the first time applied, the SEOM noted some best practices in the electoral process of the Republic of Seychelles. These included:

1. The establishment of the Electoral Commission through the new Elections Act and introduction of the Public Assembly Act;
2. The degree of professionalism of Electoral Commission staff;
3. Effective logistical arrangements, including assistance to voters with special needs;
4. Participation of local and international observers;
5. Freedom of association and expression during the electoral campaigns;
6. Generally, an atmosphere of Political tolerance demonstrated during the campaign period;
7. Participation of youth and women;
8. Engagement between the candidates and civil society during the campaign period;
9. Provision for remand prisoners to vote during special voting;
10. Use of both invisible and indelible ink to prevent double voting; and
11. Timely announcement of election results.

In order to further improve the quality of the electoral process in the Republic of Seychelles, the SEOM wishes to highlight the following concerns raised by national:

1. The independence of some of Electoral Commission Staff;
2. The duration of the elections;
3. The timing of introducing amendments to the voters registration;
4. The announcement of the date of the Presidential Election;
5. The need for a legally set election date;
6. Different interpretation of the Electoral Law;
7. Inaccuracies of the voters roll and mechanisms to update it;

8. The need to introduce voters cards as proof of citizen's registration;
9. Impediments to facilitate observation in the outer islands;
10. Excessive consumption of alcohol during campaigns;
11. The need to improve voter education by making it more accessible;
12. Lack of an electoral dispute related dispute settlement mechanism;
13. The absence of constitutional provisions regarding the transitional process;
14. A clear directive regarding the taking of pictures of citizens while casting their votes within the polling station;
15. Candidates interacting with voters at the polling station
16. SEOM noted that the two Parties contesting the Presidential Elections for the second round mutually agreed to shorten the voter identification process. Whilst this facilitated the process at polling stations, it is in breach of the Electoral Law and we therefore note that there is a need for legal consideration for amendments to be made.

In the course of observing the elections, the SEOM noted that there was a general adherence to the relevant national legal instruments as well as the revised *SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections*.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Upon completion of the second round, the Electoral Commission announced the winner of the December 2015 Presidential Election, SEOM duly noted the fact that the SNP is contesting the results and seeking redress. At this juncture, we urge that the Seychelles legal process takes its due course, in accordance with the law.

SEOM encourages the peace-loving Seychellois to continue with the spirit of political tolerance it has shown throughout the electoral process and maintain peace and tranquillity.

Based on our observations and notwithstanding the findings highlighted in our statement today, the SADC Electoral Observation Mission will continue to follow the post electoral process through the SADC Electoral Advisory Commission Goodwil Mission and the the final SEOM Report will be given after the finalization of the legal process which is being undertaken.

SEOM takes this opportunity to recognize and commend the Electoral Commission of Seychelles which, despite the short notice for the Presidential Elections, was able to professionally organize and conduct elections in preparation of the first and second rounds.

**Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Seychelles is a Member State of SADC and the SEOM has just completed its duties of observation, however, the *Troika* of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation will keenly follow-up developments in the country and if necessary, it will be available to assist in case of need of engagement.

Finally, on behalf of the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defense and Security Cooperation, His Excellency Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique, the SEOM congratulates the people of the Republic of Seychelles for the calmness and tolerant manner in which they conducted themselves during the electoral processes.

On behalf of all SADC observers, I would like to express our collective and sincere gratitude to the people of the Republic of Seychelles for their warm welcome and cooperation during the work of our Mission.

DIMOUN SESEL,

MERCI BOKOU POU ZOT GRAN LAKEY!

Thank you very much
Merci beaucoup
Muito obrigado