



**LAUNCH STATEMENT BY HONOURABLE FRANS KAPOFI, MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA AND HEAD OF THE SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION (SEOM)**

**TO THE 2022 NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO**

**MASERU, 3<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER 2022**

**Distinguished Members of the SADC Organ Troika;**

**Distinguished Representatives of the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho**

**Mr. Jorge Cardoso, Representative of His Excellency, Mr. Elias Magosi, the Executive Secretary of SADC;**

**Chairperson/Representatives and Members of the Independent Electoral Commission;**

**Mr. Denis Kadima, Head of the Electoral Commissions Forum of Southern Africa Observer Mission**

**Distinguished Representatives of International Electoral Observation Missions;**

**Your Excellencies, Heads and Representatives of the Diplomatic Missions accredited to the Kingdom of Lesotho;**

**Members of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council;**

**SADC Election Observers;**

**Leaders and Representatives of Political Parties;**

**Representatives of Local Election Observers;**

**Religious Leaders and Members of the Civil Society;**

**Members of the media;**

**Distinguished Guests;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

It is my honour and privilege to welcome you to the official launch of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) on behalf of His Excellency Dr. Hage G. Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, and the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the Independent Electoral Commission of the Kingdom of Lesotho for the invitation extended to SADC to observe the National Assembly Elections scheduled to take place on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2022, in the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Before I proceed, allow me to inform you that since our arrival, we have observed general calm and peace; these are signs of the progressing democratic culture of the

people of Lesotho, and for that we commend the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

**Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

SADC observes elections in its Member States, based on the *Revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2021)*. All SADC Member States affirmed their commitment to the implementation of these Principles and Guidelines. The Principles and Guidelines provide an objective and scientific methodology for the observation of elections, in order to contribute to the consolidation of democracy in the Region, by enhancing best electoral practices and addressing any electoral shortcomings. The Principles and Guidelines are also informed by key instruments of the African Union, such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007), as well as the relevant Conventions of the United Nations.

**Distinguished guests  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Consistent with the revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, the deployment of this SEOM was preceded by a Pre-Election Assessment and Goodwill Mission of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) from 6 - 13 May 2022. Precedent to this Mission, in May 2021, the SEAC had also conducted a post-election review to assess if, and how recommendations arising from the SEOM observations of the National Assembly Elections of 2017 have been implemented.

In view of the prevailing peace in the country, the relatively low COVID-19 disease burden and low risk of infection, the pre-elections assessment mission conducted by the SEAC concluded that the Kingdom of Lesotho is prepared to hold the National Assembly Elections. SADC will issue a preliminary statement on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2022, an event to which you are all invited.

**Distinguished guests  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) has been in Lesotho since 25<sup>th</sup> September 2022 to observe the elections set for 7<sup>th</sup> October 2022, which are for the purpose of electing members of the National Assembly and through that process, the leader of the political party or group of political parties forming a majority in the National Assembly will be elected as the Prime Minister of the country. The SEOM noted that, the elections are governed by the Constitution of the Kingdom of Lesotho, and a comprehensive set of relevant laws, which include the National Assembly Electoral Act, 2011.

It is in line with these national legal instruments, that 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:

1. Full participation of the citizens in the democratic and development processes;

2. Enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms such as freedom of association, assembly and expression;
3. Observance of the provisions of relevant legal frameworks in relation to the date or period of elections;
4. Measures to prevent corruption, bribery, favouritism, political violence, intimidation and intolerance;
5. Equal opportunity for all political parties to access the State Media as well as access to information by all citizens;
6. Respect for values of electoral justice such as integrity, impartiality and fairness;
7. No undue restraints against the opportunity to exercise the right to vote and be voted for;
8. Independence of the Judiciary and impartiality of the electoral institutions;
9. Capacitation and empowerment of citizens through civic and voter education;
10. Acceptance of and respect for the election results by political parties as proclaimed to have been free, fair, transparent, credible and peaceful, by the competent and independent Electoral Commission in accordance with the law of the land; and
11. Provision of electoral justice through expedient settlement of electoral disputes as provided for in the law.

**Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am pleased to inform you that the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to the 2022 National Assembly Elections in Lesotho consists of 63 personnel. They are from 11 SADC Member States namely, the Republic of Angola, Republic of Botswana, Kingdom of Eswatini, Republic of Malawi, Republic of Mozambique, Republic of Namibia, Republic of Seychelles, Republic of South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Republic of Zambia, and Republic of Zimbabwe.

Our observers have been deployed to the 10 districts of Lesotho, namely, Berea, Butha Buthe, Leribe, Mafeteng, Maseru, Mohale's Hoek, Mokhotlong, Qacha's Nek, Quthing, and Thaba Tseka. The SEOM observations will focus on the pre-election, election and post-election periods, which includes the campaigns, the voting day and the process of the counting of the ballot papers.

SADC urges all registered voters to exercise their civic and political rights by going out to vote on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2022. We encourage all stakeholders to ensure that these elections are conducted in a peaceful, free, fair, transparent and credible manner. We look forward to an electoral process that adheres to democratic values and principles envisioned in the SADC Treaty, the Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation; and the revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

May I also take this opportunity to reiterate the invitation for you all to attend the release of our Preliminary Statement regarding our observations of the 2022 National Assembly Elections, on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2022, at this very venue.

**Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is now my honour, on behalf of the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, His Excellency, Dr. Hage G. Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, to formally launch the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to the 2022 National Assembly Elections in the Kingdom of Lesotho.

***Thank you very much  
Muito Obrigado  
Merci beaucoup  
Asante Sana  
Rea Leboha***