



**Statement by His Excellency Mr. Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia and Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation**

**On the 20-21 December 2023 Presidential, Legislative, Provincial and Local Council Elections of the Democratic Republic of Congo**

I am honoured to join the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in addressing our sister nation, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), as she conducts the elections of the country's democratic representatives in line with her Constitution, which provides for the holding of the Presidential, Legislative, Provincial and Local Council Elections.

The SADC deployed its Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to the DRC on 06 December 2023 to observe the elections. The SEOM is a fundamental mechanism of our Community, designed to consolidate democracy, which is defined by regular, credible, free, fair, peaceful and transparent electoral processes. Accordingly, the SEOM is implementing the *SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections* to observe these elections. These Principles and Guidelines require the full, free, and inclusive participation of all citizens in the electoral and democratic processes in all SADC Member States.

The electoral cycle of every country remains a cornerstone component that defines its good governance footprint. As such, the conduct of peaceful and credible elections which uphold the common values and principles enshrined in the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections by its Member States forms an integral part of our common aspiration for a stable and prosperous Regional Economic Community.

Therefore, we remain seized with the ongoing processes that have led to the extension of the voting period, initially scheduled for 20 December 2023, to 21 December 2023. We trust that the ongoing procedures will peacefully take place and call on all national stakeholders to the electoral process, and the people of the DRC to safeguard the

peaceful conduct of the elections. We fervently hope our region, the continent, and the International Community will witness a peaceful election in the DRC.

On behalf of the SADC region, I urge all remaining eligible voters in the DRC who will be casting their votes today, to do so peacefully. The SADC further calls upon all the political actors and their supporters, the security forces and other interested parties to act responsibly and peacefully during the remaining hours of the polls and after the elections.

On behalf of the SADC region and myself, I wish the people of the DRC peaceful elections.

**H.E. HAKAINDE HICHILEMA  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA AND  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE SADC ORGAN ON POLITICS, DEFENCE AND  
SECURITY COOPERATION**

**21 DECEMBER 2023**