



**Launch Statement by Hon. Mohammed Chande Othman, Head of the SADC
Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to the National Assembly Elections in
the Republic of Mauritius and Former Chief Justice of the United Republic of
Tanzania**

5TH NOVEMBER 2024

CAUDAN ARTS CENTRE, MAURITIUS

Distinguished Members of the SADC Organ Troika;

Distinguished Representatives of the Government of the Republic of Mauritius;

Professor Kula Theletsane, Director of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Affairs, and Representative of His Excellency, Mr. Elias Magosi, the SADC Executive Secretary;

Commissioners, Representatives and Members of the Electoral Management Body (EMB);

Distinguished Representatives of International Electoral Observation Missions;

Your Excellencies, Heads and Representatives of the Diplomatic Missions Accredited to the Republic of Mauritius;

Members of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC);

SADC Election Observers;

Representatives of Local Election Observers;

Religious Leaders and Members of the Civil Society;

Members of the Media;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you, on behalf of Her Excellency Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, and Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, to this official launch of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to the Republic of Mauritius.

In the same vein, I wish to seize this opportunity to thank the Government of the Republic of Mauritius through its Electoral Commission for extending an invitation to SADC to observe the National Assembly Elections scheduled for 10 November 2024.

As I speak, we just concluded the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to the Republic of Botswana as we are gearing up for another Mission to the Republic of Namibia set to commence a few days to come. By the end of this year, the SADC Region would have gone through elections in seven (7) Member States, involving a combined total population of almost 130 million citizens. It is indeed a hectic electoral calendar demanding funding, time and human resources. At this juncture, allow me to express our gratitude to all SADC Member States for facilitating deployment of our SEOMs by providing resources and observers for this purpose.

**Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

SADC observes elections in its Member States based on the *Revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2021)* to which all SADC Member States affirmed commitment to its implementation. The *Principles and Guidelines* provide an objective and scientific methodology for observing elections to contribute to the consolidation of democracy in the Region. They are also informed by key African Union instruments (AU) instruments, such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance of 2007, and the relevant United Nations (UN) Conventions.

Our current Mission commenced its work on 28 October 2024. According to SADC norms, election observation is a lengthy and comprehensive process that engages with Member States in the pre-election, election, and post-election phases. Consistent with the revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, the deployment of this SEOM was preceded by a Pre-Election Assessment Goodwill Mission of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) from 26th August to 5th September 2024.

Given the prevailing peace in the country, the SEAC Pre-election Assessment Goodwill Mission concluded that the Republic of Mauritius is prepared to hold the

National Assembly Elections as scheduled. The SEOM will issue its Preliminary Statement on 12th November 2024 at 11:00 am in this venue, an event to which you are all invited.

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The SEOM noted that the Constitution of the Republic of Mauritius, and a set of relevant laws govern the elections. 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*, which include:

- (i) Full participation of the citizens in the democratic and development processes;
- (ii) Enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms such as freedom of association, assembly and expression;
- (iii) Observance of the provisions of relevant legal frameworks concerning the date or period of elections;
- (iv) Measures to prevent corruption, bribery, favouritism, political violence, intimidation and intolerance;
- (v) Equal opportunity for all political parties to access the State Media as well as access to information by all citizens;
- (vi) Respect for values of electoral justice such as integrity, impartiality and fairness;
- (vii) No undue restraints against the opportunity to exercise the right to vote and be voted for;
- (viii) Independence of the Judiciary and impartiality of the electoral institutions;

- (ix) Capacitation and empowerment of citizens through civic and voter education;
- (x) Acceptance of and respect for the election results by candidates and political parties as proclaimed to have been free, fair, transparent, credible and peaceful by the competent and Independent Electoral Commission following the law of the land; and
- (xi) Provision of electoral justice through expedient settlement of electoral disputes as provided for in the law.

**Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is essential that all stakeholders understand that the SEOM mandate is to determine the adherence of the Member State holding elections to the relevant provisions of the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections. In this respect, please allow me to go into some detail for the benefit of all.

To fulfil its mandate, the SEOM assesses and evaluates the following, amongst others:

1. whether the legal and constitutional framework guarantees freedom of expression, assembly, association, and human rights.
2. the structure and model of the electoral system, the Electoral Management Body (EMB), the Electoral Act and regulations, and the nature of civil and political rights, as well as economic, social, and cultural rights.
3. the establishment, process of appointment and retention of members of EMBs; in addition to assessing the composition, status, independence, impartiality, professionalism and preparedness of the EMB for the election.

4. the SEOM shall ensure that the delimitation of election boundaries was done in a manner acceptable to stakeholders, and whether the factors that prompted delimitation were in accordance with the laws of the land.
5. Whether the delimitation process was undertaken in accordance with the national law and without undue exclusion of particular groups or political interests.
6. The procedures for nomination and provision of reasonable time frames to allow political parties and candidates to comply with the requirements of the registration process.
7. There is a Code of Conduct governing all political parties and candidates.
8. The neutrality of the security forces in providing election security and the existence of requisite special voting facilities for security forces to enable them to cast their votes.
9. The requirements and practices regarding direct and indirect access to the mass media for political parties, candidates, supporters and the general public;
10. The requirements and practices concerning reporting by state controlled, public and private media about political parties, candidates and supporters or opponents.
11. The capacity and quality of civic and voter education programmes to afford all prospective voters accurate, comprehensible and adequate information upon which to make electoral choices.
12. The extent to which the process enjoys the trust of the electorate, including inclusiveness, accuracy, and transparency, and whether the electorate are able to own and identify with the process.
13. The appropriateness of locations of polling stations, and adequacy and accessibility of their facilities;

14. The production and distribution to polling stations and storage of ballots and other sensitive election materials;
15. The conduct of voting, including assistance to voters, counting, tabulation and announcement of results; the transparency of procedures and adequacy of safeguards against inaccuracies; and
16. The conduct of procedures and processes concerning electoral complaints and challenges by citizens, prospective voters, and those seeking election, including providing effective remedies for violations of electoral-related rights.

To attain objective and impartial basis from which to draw its findings, the SEOM necessarily requires to consult a broad, diverse, and unrestricted range of stakeholders in each Member State holding elections.

**Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am pleased to inform you that the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to the 2024 National Assembly Elections in Mauritius consists of seventy-three (73) Personnel with thirty-five (35) deployable observers. They are from eight (8) SADC Member States namely the Republics of Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, the Kingdom of Eswatini and the United Republic of Tanzania. The Observers underwent a four-days' training session from 1st to 4th November 2024, to be informed of the Mauritian context relative to the elections.

Our Observers will be deployed to the ten administrative Districts of Mauritius, namely, Black River, Flacq, Grand Port, Moka, Pamplemousses, Plaines-Wilhems, Port-Louis, Rivière du Rempart, Savanne and Rodrigues.

The SEOM observations will focus on the pre-election, election, and post-election periods, which include the campaigns, the voting day, the process of counting the ballot papers, announcement of election results, and the post-election environment. We also initiated stakeholder engagements in earnest since our arrival in Port Louis to appreciate the political, legal and security situation in the context of the elections.

SADC urges all registered voters to exercise their civic and political rights by turning up to cast their votes and elect leaders of their choices on 10th November 2024. We also encourage all stakeholders to ensure that these elections are conducted in a peaceful, free, fair, transparent, and credible atmosphere. 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, as well as the revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2021).

In closing, I would like to once again take this opportunity to invite you all to attend the release of our Preliminary Statement regarding our Mission's observations of the Elections on 12th November 2024, at 11.00 am, at this very venue.

**Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is now my singular honour, on behalf of the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, Her Excellency Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, to declare the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to the 2024 National Assembly Elections in the Republic of Mauritius officially launched.

Thank you very much

Merci beaucoup

Muito Obrigado

Asante Sana