



PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

BY

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AND

HEAD OF THE SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION (SEOM)

TO

THE PRESIDENTIAL AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

IN

THE REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES

EDEN BLUE HOTEL

29 SEPTEMBER 2025

Distinguished Members of the SADC Organ Troika, Republic of Malawi, the Kingdom of Eswatini and the United Republic of Tanzania;

The Right Honourable, Dr. Pakalitha Mosisili, Former Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, and Head of the Joint African Union and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (AU–COMESA) Mission to the Republic of Seychelles;

Dr. Elsie Nghikembua: Chairperson of the Electoral Commission of Namibia and Head of Mission of the Electoral Commissions Forum of SADC Countries (ECF-SADC);

H.E. Mr. André Parant: Former Ambassador to Egypt, Algeria and Senegal, and Head of Mission of the International Organisation of La Francophonie;

H.E. Mr. Oskar Benedikt, Ambassador of the European Union to the Republics of Mauritius and Seychelles;

Professor Kula Theletsane, Director of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, Representing the Executive Secretary of SADC, His Excellency Elias Mpedi Magosi;

H.E. Ms. Lisa Singh, United Nations Resident Coordinator for Republics of Seychelles and Mauritius;

Ms. Wendy Didon, Chairperson of the Electoral Commission of Seychelles and Commissioners of the Electoral Commission of Seychelles;

Distinguished Representatives of the Government of the Republic of Seychelles;

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

SADC Election Observers and other international observers;

Representatives of Local Election Observers;

Representatives of Political Parties and Independent Candidates;

Religious Leaders present;

Members of the Civil Society Organisations;

Members of the Media;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I. INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and as mandated by His Excellency Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera, President of the Republic of Malawi and the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defense and Security Cooperation, it is my honour to welcome you to this important event of the release of the Preliminary Statement of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) on the conduct of the Presidential and National Assembly elections in the Republic of Seychelles held on the 25th, 26th and 27th of September 2025.

The Mission has a total of seventy-nine (79) personnel with sixty-four (64) deployable observers. They are from eight (8) SADC Member States namely, the Republic of Botswana, the Kingdom of Eswatini, the Republic of Malawi, the Republic of Namibia, the Republic of South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania, the Republic of Zambia, and the Republic of Zimbabwe. These observers were deployed to twenty-five (25) of the twenty-six (26) Electoral Areas of the country.

The Mission observed the Presidential and National Assembly Elections in accordance with the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (revised 2021), hereinafter referred to as the *SADC Principles and Guidelines*, and the laws of the Republic of Seychelles, namely, the Constitution of the Republic of Seychelles, the Elections Act and the Political Party Registration and Regulation Act.

The *SADC Principles and Guidelines* provide an objective and scientific methodology for observing elections and contributing to the consolidation of democracy in the Region by enhancing best electoral practices and recommending how to address any electoral shortcomings or challenges.

As part of its mandate, the Mission paid a courtesy call on the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Tourism of the Republic of Seychelles and consulted a wide range of stakeholders in Seychelles to gather information on the electoral process. In this regard, the Mission consulted the following stakeholders: the Attorney General, the Electoral Commission, Human Rights Commission, the Ombudsman, civil society organisations, political parties, independent candidates, the police, media organisations, ambassadors and High Commissioners accredited to the Republic of Seychelles, academia, and Seychelles Youth Parliament .

This Preliminary Report covers the Mission's observation of the Pre-Election process, Voting Day and Counting. The Final Report will cover our observations of the post-election processes, including the results management and announcement, as well as any other post-electoral processes.

2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

2.1 The Political and Security Environment

The Mission observed that the political and security environment remained calm and peaceful, , both before, during, and immediately after the elections. Campaign activities by political parties and independent candidates were conducted freely and peacefully without any incident. I, therefore, wish to take this opportunity to commend the people of Seychelles for their peaceful conduct, which contributed to the conducive electoral environment in the country.

The Mission observed the presence of members of the Seychelles Police Force during campaign activities in most areas, monitoring the activities without interfering. There was peace and order even in areas where the Police service was not visible. This aligns with the *SADC Principles and*

Guidelines, which require Member States to ensure a peaceful environment for the holding of elections.

During the consultations with the stakeholders, the Mission noted the stakeholders' apprehension that the Seychelles Defence Force may be deployed to provide security during the elections following the 10th Amendment to the Constitution. The Amendment gives the Seychelles Defence Force (SDF) the power to enforce any written law in relation to public security, environmental protection, maritime security or maritime zones, and any other matters as may be specified in an Act. The stakeholders were worried that the Defence Force's deployment might be done with the intention of intimidating voters and candidates. However, the Mission observed that the SDF was not deployed during the elections.

2.2 Management of the Electoral Process

(i) The Electoral Management Body

Most stakeholders consulted expressed confidence in the independence, professionalism and preparedness of the Electoral Commission to conduct credible Presidential and National Assembly Elections. They also expressed satisfaction with the level of transparency and stakeholder engagement in preparation for the elections.

The Mission however noted concerns, particularly from some political parties and candidates, regarding how the nomination process was handled by the Electoral Commission, specifically the time allocated to the process and how the Commission addressed complaints and objections raised by political parties and candidates. Concerns were also raised about how the Electoral Commission had addressed the issue of polling agents for political parties, more specifically, in the outer islands. The stakeholders' view was that these concerns arose due to the increase in

the number of political parties and candidates in the 2025 Elections compared to previous elections, which may have overwhelmed the Electoral Commission.

(ii) Voter Registration and Polling Stations

The Mission noted that there was a total of 45 Polling Stations spread across the 26 Electoral Areas. The total number of registered voters was 77,045, comprising 39,792 female registered voters (approximately 52%), 37,253 male registered voters (approximately 48%), and 23,676 youth registered voters (approximately 31%). The Mission also noted that the Elections Act provides for continuous voter registration, allowing eligible citizens to register as voters at any time before the voter register is closed in preparation for the elections.

The Mission further noted concerns from some stakeholders that the final voter register was made available to political parties and candidates a few days prior to the nomination day, after the voter registration period had closed.

(iii) Voter Education

The Mission observed the conduct of voter education by the Electoral Commission and political parties, and Civil Society Organizations. Nevertheless, it noted views from some stakeholders that voter education was not comprehensive, which is an area for possible improvement in future elections.

(iv) Prohibition on the Use of Mobile Phones or Electronic Devices

The Mission noted the concerns expressed by members of the Media and other stakeholders regarding the legislative prohibition on the use of

electronic devices, including mobile phones, inside polling stations. They believe this restriction could hinder their ability to provide real-time updates on the voting process, especially in the context of the evolving digital landscape.

In this regard, the Mission was informed by the Electoral Commission that, although the law bans electronic devices in voting rooms, accredited media can use standard cameras to take photos and videos, provided they are positioned facing away from the voting booth. This rule is in place to protect the secrecy of the ballot.

2.3 Amendments to the Electoral Law

The Mission noted that amendments made to the Constitution and the Elections Act took effect in July 2025 close to the elections, following a consultative process that began in 2024 . However, stakeholders were of the view that the July 2025 electoral law amendments would not negatively impact the conduct of the elections.

2.4 Role of the Media

The *SADC Principles and Guidelines* require that all candidates and political parties be granted equal opportunity to use state media. The Mission received reports from stakeholders that the Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation, the State media, provided equal coverage to all political parties and candidates, allowing them to air their campaign messages within the maximum time allocated by the Electoral Commission, as per Section 97 of the Elections Act.

The Mission, however, noted one main concern from stakeholders which relates to coverage of news bulletins on public television and radio of Presidential events . Some stakeholders view this as an abuse of state

media, as the President uses this opportunity to campaign, and therefore call for a modality of fair coverage for all.

The Mission was informed by stakeholders that the private media were relatively balanced in terms of communicating electoral messages and campaigns of political parties and candidates, including providing equal access to them, except for paid party advertisements, which depended on the financial strength of the political parties or independent candidates.

2.5 Gender Representation

The Mission noted that women account for 52% of registered voters in Seychelles. Nevertheless, out of the eight (8) Presidential candidates, there is no woman candidate, while only four (4) women have been designated as Vice-Presidents to the Presidential candidates. For the National Assembly elections, out of 125 candidates, only 50 were women, representing 40% of the candidates. The Mission was informed that these figures represent an increase in the number of women participating in elections, particularly at the National Assembly level. Despite this increase, there appears to have been little or no effort by some political parties, which have very few or no female candidates for the National Assembly elections, to ensure gender balance in the composition of their candidates.

In the final outcome of the elections, 7 out of 26 elected Members of Parliament are women, representing a slight decline from the 2020 elections when eight women were elected. The Mission expresses hope that continued efforts will be undertaken to promote and support the participation of women as candidates, in line with the aspirations of the *SADC Protocol on Gender and Development* and the *SADC Principles*

and Guidelines, with a view to advancing equal and effective representation of women in political decision-making positions.

2.6 Complaints Resolution Mechanisms

The Mission noted concerns from stakeholders regarding the ability of the electoral complaints handling mechanisms provided for under the Elections Act to satisfactorily resolve complaints lodged by political parties and candidates with respect to matters such as the nomination process and the allocation of polling agents, especially in outer islands. Most stakeholders expressed a sense of scepticism regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of the courts in dealing with electoral disputes or any legal challenge to decisions made by the Electoral Commission during the conduct of elections.

3. OBSERVATIONS ON ELECTION DAYS

The Mission observed the following critical aspects at the 31 polling stations that were visited:

- (a) The atmosphere outside all the polling stations was orderly, calm and peaceful.
- (b) Uniformed police present in all the polling stations. They were professional and discreet.
- (c) Our observers were granted free access to all polling stations.
- (d) Ninety per cent(90%) of the polling stations were free of campaign materials or visible campaign activities.
- (e) Sixty-sevenper cent of the polling stations observed opened on time, while 33% did not open on time. The reasons given for not opening in time include delays in receiving the ballot papers, the requirement to reconcile votes from the outer

islands and slotting them into the ballot boxes , and slow opening procedures by electoral officers.

- (f) Voter education materials, such as posters were posted outside 75 % of the polling stations. Voting took on average 1-3 minutes for each voter.
- (g) All essential election materials in the correct quantities were available at all the polling stations, observed at the opening of the polls, and throughout the rest of the voting day.
- (h) The voters register was displayed outside at 25% of the polling stations observed. However, the Mission observed that the electoral officers, party/candidate agents and civil society organisation representatives had copies of the voters' roll provided to them during the opening.
- (i) All of the polling stations observed were accessible to voters with disabilities. Most of the polling stations observed gave priority to the elderly, and expectant women.
- (j) The voting process was conducted in all orderly manner at all the polling stations observed.
- (k) All voters were allowed to vote except 4, who showed up at the wrong polling station. 2 other people were not allowed to vote because they were not registered to vote.
- (l) Women formed 76% of the electoral officials, 62% of citizens observers and 64% of political party agents at the polling stations observed.
- (m) All ballot boxes at the polling stations observed remained locked and sealed.

- (n) Forty-eight per cent (48 %) of the 25 polling stations observed during closing closed on time, and 52% did not, among others, to compensate for late opening and to allow for voters that were still in the queue to vote;
- (o) All closing procedures were followed at 92% of the polling stations observed during closing. 8% did not, as the ballot counting process was prolonged and encountered organizational challenges, with observers highlighting the need for clearer guidance, improved communication, and timely announcement of results once counting had concluded.
- (p) Polling officials were courteous and professional in their conduct, and 67% polling stations had appropriate signage to direct voters to the correct voting stream.

4. BEST PRACTICE

At this stage the Mission commends the Electoral Commission and where relevant, the Government of Seychelles for the following best practices:

- (a) making provision in the law to allow pre- registration of voters aged 17 who would turn 18 years by the voting day, as this ensures that citizens who would turn 18 years by the voting day are not disenfranchised from the electoral process, and even taking into consideration those that will turn 18 years by October 11, 2025 in case there is a rerun;
- (b) the introduction of online and mobile registration, including online verification of voter registration, ensures that more voters are registered easily by leveraging technology and addressing the logistical challenges of citizens having to travel

to physical premises to register or verify their voter registration status;

- (c) allowing use of national identity cards and passports to vote;
- (d) presence of health care workers such as Red Cross volunteers at all polling stations visited; and
- (e) granting equal access to all political parties and independent candidates to campaign on Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation.

5. RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

At this juncture, I would like to note that the Mission is continuing with its electoral observation process in the post-election phase. As such, the Mission will not be rendering comprehensive recommendations or qualifications of the elections at this stage. The Mission has observed the following areas of the electoral process and system that relevant stakeholders may wish to consider improving in the next elections:

- (a) Amendments to the Electoral laws be made in good time prior to the elections to allow sufficient time for voter and civic education as well as affording adequate opportunity for the Electoral Commission and other Stakeholders to prepare to implement the amended laws;
- (b) the Electoral Commission should, given the increase in the number of political parties and candidates, consider granting sufficient time for all candidates to submit their nominations, raise objections to the nominations and for the Commission to address any such objections;

- (c) all the relevant stakeholders, including the Electoral Commission, to take measures to enhance voter and civic education to ensure the effective participation of the electorate of Seychelles in the electoral process; and
- (d) the Government and political parties to double their efforts and develop specific policies or programmes to enhance women's participation in politics, not just as voters but as candidates.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Mission observed that the pre-election and voting phases of the 2025 Presidential and National Assembly elections were professionally organised, conducted in an orderly, peaceful and free atmosphere.

The Mission commends the government and people of Seychelles for demonstrating political maturity and maintaining calm during the electoral period. In the event of any electoral disputes, the Mission appeals to all contestants to channel their concerns through established legal procedures and processes.

In accordance with *the SADC Principles and Guidelines* our Final Report will be issued within 30 days of this Preliminary Statement. In terms of these Guidelines, the Mission will continue to observe post-election processes until 3rd October 2025. The SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) shall return at an appropriate time to undertake a post-election review to determine the extent to which the recommendations of SEOM have been implemented and the nature of support, if any, that the Member State holding elections may require from the SADC region, to implement those proposals.

Thank you very much

Muito Obrigado

Merci beaucoup

Asante Sana