



**LAUNCH STATEMENT BY
HONOURABLE THEMBA NHLANGANISO MASUKU**

**HEAD OF THE SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION (SEOM) TO THE
GENERAL ELECTION (PRESIDENTIAL, PARLIAMENTARY AND LOCAL
GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS) IN THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI**

**BINGU INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE
LILONGWE, MALAWI**

10TH SEPTEMBER 2025

Distinguished Members of the SADC Organ Troika

**Distinguished Representatives of the Government of the
Republic of Malawi**

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

**Chairperson and Representatives and Members of the Malawi
Electoral Commission**

**Distinguished Representatives of International Electoral
Observation Missions**

**Your Excellencies, Heads and Representatives of the
Diplomatic Missions Accredited to the Republic of Malawi**

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.

On Behalf of His Majesty King Mswati III of the Kingdom of Eswatini, in his capacity as the In-coming Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, it is my humble pleasure to welcome you all to the launch of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to the Republic of Malawi's General Election scheduled for 16th September 2025. I also wish to express the appreciation of the entire SADC family to the people and Government of the Republic of Malawi, and the Malawi Electoral Commission for the invitation extended to the SEOM.

This is a busy end to the year 2025 as the SADC Region has almost simultaneous elections in three of its Member States, namely the Republics of Malawi and Seychelles, and the United Republic of Tanzania. Despite financial constraints that affect all our Member States, we continue to mobilise both financial and human resources to ensure that the SEOM is deployed to all our Member

States as the main support pillar for the enhancement of democracy in the Region.

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 (AU), such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance of 2007, as well as the relevant Conventions of the United Nations (UN).

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) in May 2025. In line with our electoral cycle methodology, two years ago, the SEAC conducted a Post-Election review mission in Malawi, to assess if, and how recommendations arising from the 2019 and 2020 elections have been implemented. These recommendations also include how SADC itself conducts election observation. The aforementioned missions heard, and no doubt, this mission will also hear concerns from stakeholders that in 2019, SADC failed the people of Malawi with respect to how the SEOM characterized the conduct of the general election, of which the presidential election was ultimately nullified by the courts. I assure you that substantive introspection was made, and key challenges and lessons were identified in order to improve how SADC observes elections.

Following the challenges encountered in 2019, Malawi led by example and through the appropriate national judicial mechanisms, rectified these challenges. Substantive efforts were also made by parliament to pass the required amendments to enhance democracy in the country. As a Region, we salute the people of Malawi in this regard.

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Together with the national legal instruments that govern elections in Malawi, the SADC Electoral Observation Mission will assess the conduct of the General Election 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 candidates and 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,

It is essential that all stakeholders understand that the mandate of the SEOM 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.

In order to fulfill its mandate, the SEOM assesses and evaluates the following, amongst others:

- (i) whether the legal and constitutional framework guarantees freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of association and human rights;
- (ii) 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; and economic, social and cultural rights;

- (iii) 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;
- (iv) 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;
- (v) Whether the delimitation process was undertaken in accordance with the national law and without undue exclusion of particular groups or political interests;
- (vi) 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;

- (vii) The existence of a Code of Conduct governing all political parties and candidates;
- (viii) The neutrality of the security forces in providing election security; and the existence of requisite special voting facilities for security forces to enable them cast their votes;
- (ix) The requirements and practices regarding direct and indirect access to the mass media for political parties, candidates, supporters and the general public;
- (x) The requirements and practices concerning reporting by state controlled, public and private media about political parties, candidates and supporters or opponents;
- (xi) 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
- (xii) 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.

- (xiii) The appropriateness of locations of polling stations, and adequacy and accessibility of their facilities;
- (xiv) The production and distribution to polling stations and storage of ballots and other sensitive election materials;
- (xv) 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
- (xvi) The conduct of procedures and processes concerning electoral complaints and challenges by citizens, prospective voters, and those seeking election, including the provision of effective remedies for violations of electoral related rights.

Gathering information that enables the SEOM to effectively discharge its mandate requires intensive consultations with a broad

range of stakeholders across the entire country. We understand that there are seventeen (17) candidates for the presidency, and one thousand four hundred and eighty-nine (1,489) candidates for parliament, of which more than six hundred (600) are independent candidates. We wish it was possible to consult with all candidates, in addition to other key stakeholders such as civil society organisations. Let me assure you that the SEOM will do its best to consult with a broad category of stakeholders in order to obtain as much information as possible to shape an impartial and objective understanding of the 2025 General Election in Malawi.

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our advance team arrived in Lilongwe on 2nd September 2025. As we launch the SEOM, I am pleased to inform you that our mission consists of 80 personnel. They are from nine (9) SADC Member States namely, the Kingdoms of Eswatini and Lesotho, the

Republics of Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and the United Republic of Tanzania.

Our observers will be deployed to all the twenty-eight (28) districts of Malawi. The SEOM observations will focus on the pre-election, election and post-election periods, which include the campaign rallies and events, the voting day activities at polling stations, and the results management process.

SADC urges all registered voters to exercise their civic and political rights by going out to vote on 16th September 2025. 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 invite you all to attend the release of our Preliminary Statement regarding our observations of the General Election on 18th September 2025, at this very venue.

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is now my honour and privilege, on behalf of the In-coming Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, His Majesty King Mswati III of the Kingdom of Eswatini, to formally launch the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to the 2025 General Election in the Republic of Malawi.

Thank You Very Much

Merci Beaucoup

Muito Obrigada

Asante Sana

Zikomo Kwambili