



REMARKS BY

**H.E MOKGWEETSI E. K. MASISI,
FORMER PRESIDENT OF BOTSWANA AND HEAD OF THE ICGLR
ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION**

AT THE

**RELEASE OF PRELIMINARY STATEMENTS BY
THE HEADS OF MISSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ELECTION
OBSERVATION MISSION TO THE 13TH AUGUST 2026 GENERAL
ELECTIONS OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA**

ON

15TH AUGUST 2026,

AT THE

**TAJ PAMODZI HOTEL,
LUSAKA, ZAMBIA**

**Conference Secretariat
BUJUMBURA, BURUNDI**

- His Excellency **Hailemariam Desalegn Boshe**, Head of the Joint African Union-COMESA election Observation Mission and Former Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,
- Hon. **Samuel B. Tembenu**, Head of Mission, SEOM, Former Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs of the Republic of Malawi,
- Hon. Justice **Annabel Mtalimanja**, Head of Electoral Commission Forum, Election Observation Mission and chairperson of the Malawi Electoral Commission,
- Her Excellency **Beatrice Mutali**, United Nations Resident Coordinator to the Republic of Zambia
- Distinguished Media Houses
- Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

I address you today as the Head of ICGLR Electoral Observation Mission deployed across Zambia to observe the conduct of the national elections held on the 13th August 2026. We have monitored polling and counting processes and sought to assess the extent to which elections were conducted within the parameters of Zambian Constitutional standards and international commitments.

We met and engaged key players in the election, including but not limited to His Excellency President Hichilema, Presidential candidate Mr Brian Mundubile, UPND representative, Citizen First, the Attorney General, IGP, various Churches and Church associations, women's groups, ECZ and other political parties.

Our mission is made up of close to 100 election observers from member states and was deployed throughout Zambia. We observed the opening, voting, closing, verification and counting of votes. These observed processes on the main viewed as transparent, fair, legal and peaceful. There were provisions made for the elderly, expectant mothers and people with disabilities to vote without hindrance. The election officials, the signage and facilitation of voters was generally orderly in most polling stations.

Some observers noted that a number of election officials were not able to vote because their certificates were not delivered by the ECZ. Security was present and conducted themselves in a professional manner. There was sufficient lighting and

political parties were represented in most stations while in others some parties were not represented at all.

The polling was generally peaceful in the observed stations. No campaigning was observed at and around the polling stations. A unique voter number was recorded on each ballot paper which raises the possibility of tracing a vote to the actual voter following an audit of some mischief after the vote. This raises concerns about the actual secrecy of the ballot.

Most polling stations observed were compliant with the provisions of the law as it affects the conduct of the poll on polling day. We noted a heightening of speculation, allegations and accusations as the day of polling progressed. Following serious incidents as reported, the ECZ issued a statement informing of its decision to suspend counting and announcement of results.

We have been closely monitoring recent developments including the suspension of vote counting and announcement of results. I begin by expressing our concern at this suspension and its potential effect on the credibility of the process and the confidence of voters. The right to have one's vote counted is fundamental to democratic representation. Any interruption of counting may undermine that right and must be addressed transparently and urgently. The confirmation of the suspension was made public on 14th August 2026. It was reported that suspension was a result of incidents of violence and logistical breakdowns.

When we realised that tensions were rising, perhaps following the suspension of counting and the announcements of results by the ECZ, we convened as heads of Mission and immediately engaged in shuttle diplomacy by calling on the main opposition and the ruling party to deescalate, to refrain from announcement of any results, to stop any inflammatory language, reassure us that they will continue respecting the rule of law and to trust us as neutral observers whom they should engage 24/7 for us to midwife this important General Election for democracy.

To their credit, they both graciously agreed and further agreed to issue public statements immediately to communicate such pledges and report on the outcome of our meeting with them. Finally, we informed the ECZ of our engagement with two main parties. It is our intention to engage other participants in these elections to achieve the same. To this end we have revised our departure schedules to take effect after the full conclusion of these important elections

Upon engagement with the Electoral Commission of Zambia, they provided clear explanations for the suspension. They also shared measures taken to secure

ballots, timelines and conditions required for resumption. ECZ further recommitted to the release of results within the mandated 72 hours period. As Heads of Missions, we were reassured by the explanation offered by ECZ.

I wish to underscore that a credible election is not solely the technical act of counting ballots it is the public assurance that every lawful vote will be respected and that procedures are followed transparently. Based on this understanding, the ICGLR Mission remains committed to impartial observation. We will continue to monitor developments on the ground, verify information and report our findings. We therefore renew our call for calm, restraint, respect for the of law and patience until the results are announced by the lawful authority being the ECZ.

A detailed and full statement of the 2026 Zambia elections will be issued following the conclusion of the elections.

I thank you for your attention.