

**SADC Electoral Observer Mission to the Republic of Mozambique Launch - Statement by Hon. Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa and Head of SADC Electoral Observer Mission to the Republic of Mozambique General Elections, to be held On 15 October 2014**

**03 October 2014, Hotel VIP, Maputo, Mozambique**

- Your Excellency Dr. Stergomena Lawrence Tax, SADC Executive Secretary;
- Chair of Mozambique Electoral Commission (CNE) and all the Electoral Commissioners here present;
- Representatives of the Mozambique Government;
- Esteemed Leaders of the Political Parties;
- Religious Leaders;
- Members of Civil Society;
- Your Excellencies High Commissioners and Ambassadors accredited to the Republic of Mozambique;
- Esteemed Members of the various Observer Missions;
- Members of the Media;
- Distinguished Guests;
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the Chair of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security, H.E Jacob G Zuma, I rise to welcome you all to this, the launch of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to the 2014 General Elections in the Republic of Mozambique.

As I welcome you, I also wish to take this opportunity, to thank you profoundly for honouring our invitation to this launch. I equally wish to express our gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Mozambique and Mozambique Electoral Commission for inviting SADC to observe the fifth democratic elections in this great Republic.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It was in 1994 that Mozambique conducted her first democratic multiparty elections after a devastating civil war. Today, twenty years on we are here to launch a SADC Election Observation Mission in Mozambique, a country that has become a model of democracy, peace and stability, a country that has also become a beacon of hope not only to its citizens but also to the SADC region at large.

At this juncture, I wish to reiterate SADC's congratulations to the Government and the people of Mozambique for the commendable signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement on 5th September 2014. We wish to assure you that SADC is fully supportive of the peace process in this great country.

**Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,**

The SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) participated in the last General Elections in the Republic of Mozambique in October 2009 as it did with other previous elections. The upcoming elections on 15th October 2014 is therefore a testament that the country is committed to holding elections periodically, thus entrenching democracy and good governance in the country and subjecting the mandate of the political leadership to a democratic test.

As a regional body, we take cognisance of the fact that elections are not an end in themselves in a democracy but rather part of a process of ensuring the inclusion of citizens and constantly seeking for a mandate from the citizens.

**Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,**

As part of its observation process, SEOM is guided by various national and regional legal provisions and frameworks as well as international norms to ensure democracy and good governance in Member States.

The region's governance aspirations are prescribed in Article 4 of the SADC Treaty that commits Member States to ensure the observance of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Furthermore, Article 5 of the Treaty commits Member States to "promote common political values, systems and other shared values which are transmitted through institutions, which are democratic, legitimate, and effective".

The SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections form part of the legal parameters of our observation processes. They are our regional benchmark that embodies the aspirations, norms and values of Member States.

It is against this background that SADC, in particular, H.E President Jacob G. Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa and Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation has constituted the SEOM to Mozambique which I have been tasked to lead.

The SEOM is here therefore as an instrument that will monitor adherence to the set election principles and guidelines of SADC as well as the legal framework of Mozambique to consolidate, and maintain democracy, peace, security, and stability in the individual Member States and the region as a whole.

**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

SADC has been involved with the political situation in Mozambique through the various structures and we are pleased to note and commend the positive collaboration of the political and electoral stakeholders in the country and their commitment to ensuring that the electoral calendar proceeds as scheduled.

In our initial contact with the Electoral Commission, we have received assurances that the political and electoral preparations for the holding of the elections have been proceeding well.

I would also take this opportunity to encourage the political leaders to continue to work together in the national interest of Mozambique.

Ladies and gentlemen,

SADC will deploy approximately 150 Observers, in 46 teams across all the provinces of Mozambique. The Observers deployed will consider and examine the conduct of the General elections in Mozambique against the following SADC principles:

- Full participation of the citizens in the political process;
- Freedom of association;
- Political tolerance;
- Regular intervals for elections as provided for by the respective National Constitution;
- Equal opportunity for all political parties to access the state media;
- Equal opportunity to exercise the right to vote and be voted for;
- Independence of the Judiciary and impartiality of the electoral institutions; and
- Voter education.

- Acceptance and respect of the election results by political parties of the results as proclaimed to have been free and fair by the competent National Electoral Authorities in accordance with the law of the land.
- Challenge of the election results as provided for in the law of the land.

Furthermore, as part of its Terms of Reference, the SEOM's scope of observation will be informed by the following guidelines that guarantee conducive environment for free, fair and peaceful elections:

- constitutional and legal guarantees of freedom and rights of the citizens,
- voters' registration process;
- existence of an updated and accessible voters roll;
- location of polling stations in neutral places; and
- timeous announcement of the election date,

The role and presence of the SEOM in an election enhance the credibility of the electoral process. In addition, the deployment of the SEOM is in part to facilitate learning and the development of regional democratic norms and values. The SEOM forms part of the democratic peer review process that seeks to encourage the application of the regional electoral standards as prescribed by the region.

In conclusion, SADC will release its preliminary findings on the electoral process on 17 October, at this venue.

SADC through the SEOM reaffirms its commitment and support to the people of Mozambique and will work towards ensuring the smooth electoral process.

I further wish to take this opportunity to wish the people of Mozambique a successful election.

On behalf of the Chair of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security, H.E Jacob G. Zuma, I declare the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to the Republic of Mozambique officially launched.

Obrigado,

Thank you very much.