

LAUNCH OF THE 2014 NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

**ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION, ADV.
PANSY TLAKULA**

**9 OCTOBER 2013
GALLAGHER ESTATE**

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you here today at this event to launch the Electoral Commission's communications campaign for the 2014 national and provincial elections.

Since its establishment in 1997, the Electoral Commission has managed a total of six general elections. These were three national and provincial elections in 1999, 2004 and 2009 and three municipal elections in 2000, 2006 and 2011. All these elections went fairly smoothly, and were all declared free and fair by observers. The enthusiastic participation of South Africans in these elections has also ensured that we have avoided an international trend of declining voter turnout. These achievements however have not lulled us into a sense of complacency.

The national and provincial elections of 2014 will mark 20 years of democracy since the landmark elections of 1994. The scenes from those first elections are forever inscribed in the national memory. For the first time, South Africans from all walks of life stood in line, waiting to participate as equals in determining a government for the country. On that occasion, we honoured the words in the Preamble to our Constitution: "We, the people of South Africa... believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity."

There would be no better way to celebrate this milestone – 20 years of democracy – than to ensure that every eligible South African is able to register and to vote in these coming elections. Our democracy will be strengthened by the patriotic involvement of all our citizens. The Commission is therefore determined to ensure that we attain a record number of registrations for these elections. We are also preparing ourselves for an exceptionally high voter turnout. South Africans have repeatedly shown us that they will rise to the occasion and we are confident that the opportunity of the coming elections will be no different.

In South Africa, our legislative framework requires citizens to register before they are allowed to vote. It is important to note that registration is apolitical. Everyone has a role to play in encouraging unregistered citizens to register. The call by the Electoral Commission to encourage voter registration is one that must be embraced by political parties, the media, educational institutions, organized labour, organized business, religious institutions, faith-based organisations, traditional leaders, government, Chapter 9 institutions and civil society as a whole. We have already begun the process to consult with various stakeholders in this regard and we will continue to do so beyond the general registration weekend.

The Electoral Commission is a continuously learning organization that operates in a maturing democracy. Operating, as it does, in a fairly young democracy, we have learnt and continue to learn from our counterparts in other parts of the world. We however also tap into the wealth of knowledge that exists within the borders of our own country. In preparation for the 2014 national and provincial elections, the Commission considered a number of areas to improve the management of elections. This led to consultative processes with various stakeholders, including observers, civil society organisations and political parties. One of the outcomes of these consultations is the proposed legislative amendments currently before Parliament. If passed, the Electoral Amendment Bill will extend voter registration opportunities for South African citizens outside of the Republic. This will be another step forward in our evolving democracy in order to extend the right to vote.

The Chief Electoral Officer and his colleagues will brief you about the plans that have been made for the registration weekend and for the elections. While the date for the elections has not been proclaimed yet, the Commission has planned to be ready at the earliest possible date within the legislative framework.

It now gives me great pleasure to announce that the Commission has determined the dates for a general voter registration weekend. These dates are Saturday, 9 November and Sunday, 10 November 2013. All our voting stations in the country will be open for the purposes of voter registration from 8 am to 5 pm. Preparations for this registration weekend are already at an advanced stage. Our officials will be ready to welcome and to assist prospective voters.

The Commission invites all eligible citizens who are not yet registered as voters to use this opportunity to join the millions of South Africans who are already on the national voters' roll. The registration weekend can also be used by all registered voters as an opportunity to inspect their details on the voters' roll. Voters who have moved since their last registration are also called on to register in their new voting districts.

We make a special call on young people, especially those who will be eligible to register and to vote for the first time, to show up in your numbers on the registration weekend. You are a special generation – the first to have been born in a democratic and free South Africa and who are now able to participate in the democratic life of our nation. Democracy and freedom came at a great price and cannot be taken for granted. The right to vote was achieved through tireless efforts by many South Africans of previous generations. Many of them were young people at the time and some of them lost their lives in the struggle for freedom. We should therefore treasure and use the opportunity to exercise this right. To fail to do so would be a disservice to the sacrifices of so many who have gone before.

I would like to echo the words of our former President, Nelson Mandela: “The youth of South Africa made a crucial contribution to the struggle for liberation, and I have no doubt in my mind that they have what it will take to put the injustices of the past behind them.”^[1]

[1]^[1] At the opening of the Young Christian Workers World Council, 26 November 1995.

The campaign which we launch today is a call on all South Africans to commit to the future of our beautiful country. We all have our unique reasons for voting. Whatever your reasons might be, the Commission is committed to ensuring that all eligible South Africans will be offered the opportunity to exercise their right to register to vote.

We are acutely aware of the past and the sometimes painful road that we have travelled. But we are also mindful of the expression that there is a time for everything: "a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance." We would like to mark the occasion of the 20th anniversary of our democracy as a time to celebrate, while honouring those who have worked to achieve this democracy, which we enjoy.

Thank you.

Launch of the 2014 National and Provincial Elections

**Address by Mr Mosotho Moepya
Chief Electoral Officer**

**Gallagher Convention Centre
9 October 2013**

Since we last met in this manner, the Electoral Commission has been hard at work and now wishes to proudly make it known that:

1. It has worked hard to increase its voting station network by 9.4% as compared to the 2011 Local Government Elections (20 859 in 2011 and 22 264 currently) in line with settlement development patterns across the nation;
2. In collaboration with the Department of Home Affairs, we tested the Smart Card Identity for use on the scanners for both registration and voting purposes. These tests were successful and the Smart Card Identity will be accepted as valid registration and voting tender.
3. Our website has been upgraded to a format that is form-friendly and therefore accessible from mobile phones, tablets and conventional desktops;
4. Outreach capacity has been strengthened across all our regional offices countrywide. Together with civil society organisations, we have also established a National Co-ordinating Forum (NCF), which will be instrumental in re-inforcing our ability to address three critical matter in this area of our work, namely: (1) the delivery of civic and voter education in general but in this instance, the delivery of such services by CSOs in particular; (2) the co-ordination of efforts aimed at proactively addressing conflict management; and (3) to encourage election observation especially by domestic observers;
5. Careful attention has been placed on the quality of electoral staff we are recruiting, their impartiality and the training they will be receiving. To this end, revised training content has been designed and packaged in modular format for easy assimilation over shorter but regular training periods; and
6. We have just concluded an exciting Schools Democracy Week programme, which was a first initiative of this kind, undertaken in conjunction with the Department of Basic Education. Through this programme, suitable and exciting content designed by ourselves and approved by the Department was presented to learners in 8 provinces from 1-7 October 2013. The ninth province will be undertaking this programme from 14 - 18 October 2013. We are excited that learners had the opportunity to register as voters where appropriate.

The South African voters' roll remains a fundamental contributor to the credibility of the country's elections. It is regularly updated against the national population register (at least once-a-month); It maintains audit trails of all voters since the first voters' roll was compiled in 1998; it is readily available for inspection whenever an election is

called; and copies of the voters' roll are provided to parties and candidates contesting elections.

Since the first voters' roll was compiled, the Electoral Commission has increased the enrolment of voters by 21,3%. This is a net increase after taking into account those voters who are on the rejected portion of the voters' roll. We have consistently attained 80% and more of the voting age population.

Following the release of Census 2011 data by Statistics South Africa in 2012, the Electoral Commission has established the potential registration gap, which stands at approximately 8,3m, before taking into account the natural attrition of registered and eligible voters. This Census data places our current registered voting age population at 73,6%. In keeping with our trend of maintaining the voting age population in the 80% region, it is clear that our registration efforts will be targeting 2 006 229 new registered voters. This, we hope to achieve through the registration weekend as determined for Saturday 9 and Sunday 10 November 2013, as well as other on-going registration initiatives in this period.

There are at least two provinces that have already achieved their registration targets. These are the Eastern Cape and the Free State. Even so, there will be no letting down on any further opportunities to allow for further registration of voters in these provinces.

It is important to note that the greatest registration gap is in the age categories 18-19 and 20-29, with registration gaps of current registrations standing at 8.4% and 49.4% respectively. We take heart from the observation that many of these potential voters will be afforded the opportunity of a general registration weekend for the first time in November 2013.

From the analysis of the registration gap, it is evident that the Electoral Commission's communication campaign has to be youthful, fun and engaging – without alienating other potential voters in the more senior age groupings. For that purpose, the campaign will add for the first time, social media elements and seek presence on various youth platform across radio, television, print media, mobile and many other conventional platforms we have used in the past. This campaign will be rolled effectively from today, shortly after the unveiling of the campaign logo. Our toll-free number has also been activated effectively from 8 am today and will remain in operation until after Election Day in 2014.

All of us at the Electoral Commission are excited that amazing things are about to happen. We invite you to contact us on:

1. The website at www.elections.org.za;
2. Facebook at [facebook.com/iecsouthafrica](https://www.facebook.com/iecsouthafrica);
3. Twitter at twitter.com/iecsouthafrica;
4. Toll-free from landlines at 0800 11 8000

Registration details can also be checked by:

1. SMS on 32810 (send ID number only);
2. Am I registered? (on IEC Website)
3. Where do I register? (on IEC Website)

My colleagues will present the readiness picture across the nation in more specific details. It will be clear that we are raring to go.

I thank you.

/Ends