



**SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION TO
THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

STATEMENT

BY

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MINISTER OF

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OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION

TO THE 2014 GENERAL ELECTIONS

IN THE

REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA,

DELIVERED ON 26 OCTOBER 2014

Gaborone, Republic of Botswana

Justice Abednego Tafa, Chairperson of the Botswana Independent Electoral Commission,
Your Excellency Dr. Joyce Banda, Former President of the Republic of Malawi and Head of the African Union (AU) Observer Mission,
Dr Stergomena Lawrence Tax, SADC Executive Secretary,
Heads of International Electoral Observation Missions to the Republic of Botswana,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Esteemed Leaders of Political Parties and Independent Candidates,
Members of the Media,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have invited you here this morning to share with you the preliminary findings of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM), on the General Election in the Republic of Botswana held on 24 October 2014. I welcome you all and thank you for honouring our invitation.

In the SADC tradition of observing elections in its Member States, I have been privileged to lead the SEOM to the General Elections in the Republic of Botswana. The SADC observation missions aim to assess the extent to which the constitution, electoral laws of the member state, as well as our own *SADC Guidelines and Principles Governing Democratic Elections*, are followed. The ultimate objective is to consolidate democracy and improve the quality of our electoral processes.

The SEOM is here at the invitation of His Excellency Lieutenant General Seretse Khama Ian Khama, President of the Republic of Botswana. The invitation was extended through His Excellency Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, and Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation.

In this regard, President Zuma officially constituted the Observation Mission and appointed me, in my capacity as Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa, to head the SEOM to Botswana, and mandated Dr. Stergomena Lawrence

Tax, SADC Executive Secretary, to facilitate its deployment. I have been assisted in this task by the incoming and outgoing Chairpersons of the Troika of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, in the persons of Ambassador Julius Metsing, representing the Kingdom of Lesotho and Ambassador Nicky Nashandi representing the Republic of Namibia.

**Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In accordance with our tradition, the SADC Secretariat facilitated the Assessment Mission to Botswana in September 2014, under the auspices of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC). The SEAC Pre-election Report confirmed that the environment in the Republic of Botswana was conducive to the holding of elections. The SEOM was assisted by SEAC during its election observation.

Following the training of observers, the SEOM was officially launched at Boipuso Hall in Gaborone Fairground, on 10 October 2014. Subsequently 107 Observers from 9 Member States were deployed in 25 teams to the 10 districts of Botswana.

In fulfillment of its mandate, the SEOM closely observed pre-election events and preparations, including political rallies and media coverage of the elections. The mission also consulted several stakeholders including the Government, to gather information on various aspects of the electoral process.

Stakeholders consulted included, *inter alia*:

1. The Vice President of the Republic of Botswana;
2. The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation;
3. The Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC);
4. Representatives of contesting Political Parties and some Independent Parliamentary Candidates;
5. Botswana Police Service;
6. Media representatives;
7. Civil Society representatives;

8. Regional NGOs;
9. The SADC Heads of Missions in Botswana.
10. AU and other International Election Observation Missions; and

Prior to the elections, the following concerns were raised during consultations with the stakeholders:

- Alleged insufficient funding for the IEC by Government resulting in inadequate voter education;
- Alleged utilisation of government resources by the ruling party for election campaigning;
- Lack of state financial support for political parties;
- Centralisation of the Voters' Roll and long distances that voters were expected to travel to inspect the Voters' Roll;
- Alleged media polarization between state and private media;
- Alleged bias of the state media in favour of the ruling party; and
- Low representation of women among candidates.

These concerns were discussed with the IEC, political parties, civil society and other relevant stakeholders and the explanations were provided.

**Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The SEOM observed that before, during and after the elections, the political atmosphere was generally peaceful. While isolated inter-party incidents in some districts did occur prior to the elections, contesting parties demonstrated a high level of political tolerance and maturity. It was noted that people were free to express their opinions and to associate.

The SEOM noted that the election date was timely and procedurally proclaimed on 4 July 2014, as provided for by the Electoral Act and the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections. The Mission further noted that the 2014 elections recorded the highest number of independent candidates for parliament ever in the history of elections in Botswana. In respect to gender, the SEOM

did note the disproportionate representation of women as candidates across the parties.

Special gratitude must go to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) for their willingness to both facilitate the participation of the SEOM and to inform the Mission regarding the state of their preparedness and readiness to organise, manage and deliver credible elections. The Mission noted the technical preparedness of the IEC in its conduct of the electoral process which was done in a transparent manner and exhibited a high level of professionalism.

SEOM noted that due to shortage of funding, the IEC faced challenges to undertake comprehensive voter education. In order to mitigate this challenge, the IEC utilised direct contact with voters such as disseminating information through radio programmes, distribution of flyers in public places, and the holding of community meetings including the Kgotla.

SEOM noted that the Botswana legislation does not make provision for political party funding by Government. It was further noted that political parties are not obliged to disclose the amounts and sources of their funding.

With regard to media coverage, SEOM observed the positive development that for the first time, private radio stations facilitated public debates and interviewed candidates in the 57 constituencies. The state-owned Radio Botswana also facilitated public debates which was a positive development to get the message of the candidates to the voters.

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The voting was done in two phases, namely the Special Vote held on 18 October 2014 for election officers, police officers and the diaspora; and the General Election held on 24 October 2014 for the rest of the electorate.

SEOM noted that campaigning ended at midnight on 23 October 2014, and that no campaigning took place on the day of elections.

During both votes SEOM observed the following:

- In general, polling stations did open on time, and the opening procedures were followed in accordance with the provisions of the Electoral Act;
- In general, the voting process went smoothly. SEOM observed that there were no incidents of violence reported by the SEOM observers during voting. The Mission also noted that the presence of the security personnel contributed to the peaceful atmosphere during the entire voting process;
- Party agents and independent candidates' agents were present at the opening and closing of polling stations;
- Generally, the Voters' Roll was in order;
- The layout of the polling stations promoted easy flow of voting and as a result, voting was orderly throughout the process;
- The public were shown empty ballot boxes before they were sealed with both IEC and party agents' seals before voting commenced;
- In order to vote, voters were required to produce their voter's card and identity document;
- The voter's name, identity number and registration number were read out to the polling officials and party agents, who identified the name on the Voters' Roll in their possession, prior to voting;
- Most polling stations closed at the time provided for in the Electoral Act. Voters who were still in queues at the formal closing of the polling stations were allowed to cast their vote;
- Party agents affixed their seals to the ballot boxes prior to transportation to the counting centres;
- Counting of the ballots followed the prescribed counting procedures;
- Returning Officers at counting centres announced the results immediately after counting, as provided for in the Electoral Act.

**Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like to congratulate the people of Botswana for displaying maturity and cooperation in the face of challenges during the election process.

The SEOM congratulates the IEC who were able to professionally and transparently conduct the elections.

Some best practices observed by the SEOM included:

- a) Freedom of association and of expression during the electoral campaigns;
- b) Political tolerance demonstrated during the campaign period. Members of competing parties were able to interact with each other in a positive and mature manner, even at rallies;
- c) Generally peaceful political environment throughout the electoral period;
- d) Debates between political candidates facilitated by radio and television stations;
- e) Professionalism of IEC staff;
- f) Professional conduct and facilitation by the security personnel during the electoral process;
- g) Reading aloud the voter's name, identity number and registration number to polling officials and party agents, who could then identify the name on the Voters' Roll in their possession, prior to voting;
- h) The introduction of braille ballot papers in line with SADC recommendations after the 2009 elections; and
- i) Continuous registration of voters as recommended by SADC in 2009.

The SEOM has also listed a number of recommendations for the consideration of the Government of Botswana. These include:

- A concerted effort to encourage women to stand as political candidates;
- The use of indelible ink to prevent double voting under any circumstances;
- The use of a scanner to scan the identity document of the voter to prevent double voting;

- Intensified civic and voter education by the IEC, particularly to encourage the youth to participate in elections;
- Enhanced utilisation of recently-introduced braille ballot papers;
- The introduction of translucent ballot boxes; and
- Functioning of the media regulatory bodies.

**Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

While concerns were raised by some stakeholders regarding the electoral process, it was observed that those concerns did not hamper full and free participation in the elections.

Based on its observation, the SEOM has concluded that the General Elections held in Botswana on 24 October 2014 were peaceful, free and fair, transparent, and credible, thus reflecting the will of the people of Botswana in accordance with the National Electoral Laws and the *SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections*.

A final report containing observations and recommendations of the electoral process to the Government of the Republic of Botswana shall be released within thirty (30) days after the announcement of the election results.

I would like to emphasise that the *SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections* state clearly that any challenge to the election results should be done in accordance with the laws of the country. The SEOM urges all political parties, and other stakeholders, to respect the will of the people in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Botswana, and the *SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections*.

This 2014 General Election marks yet another milestone in the long standing democracy of the Republic of Botswana. Botswana remains unique in Africa in that it has enjoyed 48 years of sustained and uninterrupted democracy. This achievement should be emulated by other SADC Member States in their efforts to consolidate and enhance democracy in the region.

Finally, on behalf of the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, His Excellency, Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, the SEOM congratulates the people of the Republic of Botswana for the manner in which they conducted themselves during the electoral process. On behalf of all the SADC Observers, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the people of the Republic of Botswana for their warm welcome and cooperation during the work of our mission.

RE A LEBOGA! PULA!

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