

Electoral Commissions Forum of SADC Countries

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A PRELIMINARY STATEMENT TO THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION (CNE) OF MOZAMBIQUE BY THE ELECTORAL COMMISSIONS FORUM OF SADC COUNTRIES (ECF-SADC) ELECTORAL OBSERVER MISSION ON THE MOZAMBIQUE PRESIDENTIAL, PARLIAMENTARY & PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS HELD ON THE 15TH OCTOBER 2014

1. INTRODUCTION

On 29th August 2014, the Electoral Commissions Forum (ECF-SADC) of SADC countries received an invitation from the National Electoral Commission (CNE) of Mozambique to observe the Presidential, National Assembly and Provincial Elections scheduled for 15th October 2014 in the Republic of Mozambique.

In response to this invitation the ECF-SADC arrived in the country on 7th October, 2014. It deployed a 29 member Observer Mission, drawn from the Electoral Commissions of Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The mission was led by Justice Rita Makarau, Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission.

2. THE ROLE OF THE ECF-SADC ELECTION OBSERVER MISSION

The ECF-SADC, which comprises the Electoral Commissions of the 14 SADC member States, views election observation as an important activity through which it

Forum Presidency: Justice Rita Makarau- President (Zimbabwe), Justice André da Silva Neto – (Angola)

EXCO: Chairperson: Justice Mahapela Lehohla (Lesotho), **Vice Chairperson:** Justice Maxon R. Mbendera, SC (Malawi), Justice A. Tafa (Botswana), Mr. M. I Abdool Rahman (Mauritius), Mr. Hendrick Gappy (Seychelles),

can strengthen co-operation amongst member Commissions and thereby promote conditions that are conducive to the holding of free, fair and credible elections within the region. As such when observing elections, the ECF-SADC focuses, primarily on elections administration and identifies areas that may require strengthening and improving upon. The ECF-SADC Observer Mission is designed essentially as a Peer Support Mission.

The ECF-SADC Observer Missions are guided by regional instruments such as the Principles of Election Management, Monitoring and Observation (PEMMO) in the SADC region and the Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections in the SADC region as well as the Constitution and other laws of the country holding the elections. Consistent with the aforementioned legal instruments, the ECF-SADC Observer Mission work is guided by values such as objectivity, transparency, neutrality and impartiality.

3. PRE-POLL MISSION ACTIVITIES

The ECF-SADC Observer Mission met with a number of stakeholders in the electoral process, including:

- the National Electoral Commission of Mozambique,
- representatives of political parties contesting the elections,
- the media institutions and
- Civic Society Organisations.

The Mission exchanged observation notes with SADC and African Union (AU) Observer Missions. The Mission also benefitted from a meeting organised by the aforesaid missions which was also attended by the heads of the EU, the Commonwealth, Comunidade Dos Paises De Lingua Portuguesa (CPLP), the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa and the Carter Centre (EISA-TCC) Missions.

The Mission attended the final political party rallies by Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO), Freedom for Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) and Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM).

4. DEPLOYMENT OF THE MISSION

Prior to the deployment of the ECF-SADC Election Observer Mission, a Pre-Election Assessment Team (PEAT) was deployed to the Republic of Mozambique. The principal objective of the PEAT was to assess the state of preparedness of the CNE to conduct the 15 October 2014 Tripartite Elections.

The Mission deployed delegates to the five provinces which are: Maputo City, Maputo Province, Manica, Inhambane and Gaza from 11th to 16th October 2014.

Upon deployment, all teams visited their assigned provinces and familiarized themselves with the location of polling stations, despatch of material, training of polling staff and general readiness for the poll.

5. THE ELECTIONS

5.1 Voting by citizens living abroad

The Mission did not witness any voting by citizens living abroad as it is done outside Mozambique.

5.2 Polling Day

In general, the Mission observed the following:

- Opening procedures were adhered to.
- Most polling stations visited opened at 07h00 hours as stipulated by the Electoral Law.
- There were political party campaign materials within the prohibited voting station perimeter of 300 metres in violation of the electoral law (Article 84 of Presidential and Parliamentary Election Law 8/2013).

- Security forces were visible at some of the voting stations visited. Some were armed.
- The polling station staff seemed adequately trained.
- The election materials were available in sufficient quantities.
- The layout of some of the polling stations did not promote the easy flow of the voting process.
- The polling stations were laid out in a manner that protects the secrecy of the ballots.
- Voters were checked on the Voters' Roll before being issued with ballot papers.
- Voters were checked for ink before being issued ballot papers in order to ensure that they did not vote more than once.
- Voters' right index fingers were inked after they had voted.
- Voters were provided with appropriate assistance whenever they needed it.
- The elderly, expecting mothers and physically challenged were given priority.
- There were no incidents of voter intimidation and politically motivated violence at polling stations visited.
- Voting went on uninterrupted at polling stations visited.
- Ballot boxes were kept sealed throughout the voting process.
- Some political parties did not deploy agents and polling officers to some of the polling stations.
- There was no proper signage directing the public to the polling stations.
- Long queues started forming quite early in the day.
- There was live public media coverage throughout the country.
- The conduct of the election was orderly and peaceful.
- Ballot paper colours were very distinct.
- Most Presiding Officers played a participatory role rather than the supervisory role.
- Voters who did not appear in the voters' registers were not allowed to vote.
- Most of the voting stations closed at 1800 hours as stipulated by the electoral laws of Mozambique.
- Domestic and international observers were visible at some of the counting centres.
- Closing procedures were adhered to.

- In some polling stations there was adequate lighting to ensure a smooth counting process.
- Most counting stations layout allowed for easy observation of the counting process.
- Temporary voting stations were too small to accommodate the polling staff and materials.

6. BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNT

Noted below are the best practices and lessons learnt during the Observer Mission:

- The streams expedite the flow of voting process.
- Identification receipt with numbers expedited the voting process.
- Declaring a holiday on voting day enables all eligible voters to cast their votes.
- Early closure of polling stations reduces pressure at closing time.
- Inspection of ballot booth in between voting process
- Participation of women, youth, minorities and special groups in the electoral process is highly commended.
- Facilitation of voting by polling staff.
- Posting of ballot paper sample outside the voting station enables voters to familiarise themselves with the ballot paper in use.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Accreditation of Observers can be expedited.
- Availability of relevant information on the location of polling stations.
- Timely despatch of election material and deployment of polling staff.
- Each political party should submit its calendar of activities to stakeholders in the electoral process.
- The Public Broadcasters namely TVM and Radio Mozambique should be independent from the influence of the government and the ruling party and its allies.
- The ballot papers should be stamped at the back for validation purposes.

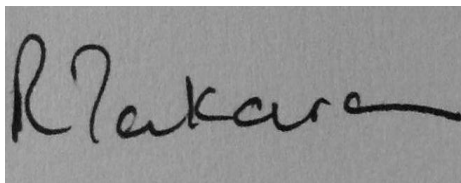
- Non-security materials should be distributed early to allow for timeous opening of polling stations.
- Allocation of ballot papers should be in accordance with the number of voters.
- Proper management of ballot papers during voting.
- CNE and STAE should ensure adequate security when transporting security materials.
- The application of indelible ink should be done by using an indelible marker
- The ballot box should be positioned in such a way that is a few metres away from the table of issuing the ballot papers.

8. CONCLUSION

The ECF-SADC Mission commends the National Electoral Commission (CNE) for successfully organising the 2014 Tripartite Elections. The National Electoral Commission demonstrated professionalism and independence for which they should be highly commended.

The Mission highly commends the people of Mozambique, the CNE, STAE, all political parties and candidates for a free, fair, credible and peaceful process in which all stakeholders participated freely.

Signed in Maputo, Republic of Mozambique this 16th day of October 2014.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a grey background. The signature appears to read 'R Makarau' in a cursive script.

Hon Justice Rita Makarau

**Head of ECF-SADC Electoral Observer Mission &
Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission**