



EISA Election Observer Mission to the 2014 South African National and Provincial Elections

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

9 May 2014

Background

Following an invitation from the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of South Africa to observe the 2014 National Assembly and Provincial elections in South Africa, the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) deployed a team of twelve (12) observers. The Mission members were drawn from the Electoral Management Body of the Central African Republic (CAR), representatives of the Somali Government, Parliament and civil society organisations and international members of EISA staff.

The delegation complements EISA's longer term electoral assessment effort that involves local researchers in all the nine provinces of the country through an innovative method of gathering information to produce EISA Election Update 2014. Eight volumes of the update covering the pre-election, election phase and also post-election phase will be published. By the time of the elections, five volumes of the updates were already available on www.electionupdate.org.za.

The EISA Mission has made its assessment of the 2014 South African electoral process, and its preliminary findings and recommendations are presented in this Interim Statement. Its observations and views are based on the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, the African Union Declaration of the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa, the Declaration of Principles on International Election Observation and EISA/ECF's Principles for Election Management, Monitoring and Observation (PEMMO).

Key findings of the EISA observation mission include the following:

The Polling Process: The official hours of voting were 7a.m - 9p.m. Polling stations in areas observed were free from campaign materials. The presence of the police in polling stations was discreet without interfering with the voting process. While noting that polling stations generally opened on time, the Mission also noted that there were a number of factors which led to the delays in opening of some polling stations

visited by the EISA teams. The main reason in most cases was the late delivery of materials to the polling stations.

The Mission commends the use of the zip machine which made it easier to identify voters who were registered in other voting districts to enable them to vote outside their voting districts or provinces. The Mission however noted that with 9.5% increase in the number of registered voters for the 2014 elections, the number of polling stations provided is becoming insufficient to cater for the number of voters.

Ballot boxes: Election officials attempted to mark ballot boxes for each of the two elections for ease of identification. This attempt was not clear enough though, as voter's continued to call election officials to seek clarification on which of the boxes to cast the ballot. Some voters were observed unfolding their marked ballots to be reminded which ballot paper goes into which box. This could compromise the secrecy of the ballot.

Turnout: The 2014 National Assembly and Provincial elections provided the "born-free generation¹" their first opportunity to vote freely in the democratic elections. Long lines were observed as South Africans turned out to vote in significant numbers, showing patience, enthusiasm and great determination in casting their ballots. There was a noticeable high turnout of women and youth in most polling stations visited.

Gender Equality: The Mission notes with satisfaction the strong participation of South African women in the electoral process as voters, election personnel, party agents, and observers. The participation of women was without discrimination as women served at the same levels as men at the polling stations.

Party Agents and Observers: The Mission noted with satisfaction the strong presence of party agents in all polling stations visited which was indicative of the transparency of the polling process. Notably party agents were mainly from African National Congress (ANC), Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). There were no indications of restriction on the participation of other parties.

Election Materials: Despite the late delivery of materials at some polling stations, the Mission noted with satisfaction that electoral materials were in sufficient quantities throughout the polling process when they arrived.

Polling station layout: The layout of the polling stations observed by the Mission was generally conducive for an easy flow of voters and the secrecy of the vote was guaranteed by the layout of these stations.

Election personnel: Election personnel conducted their duties in an efficient and transparent manner following compliance with the election day procedural guidelines provided in the legal framework.

Closing and Counting Process: Polling stations were closed in accordance with the electoral law and procedures and counting started immediately after voting closed at 21:00 and continued until the early hours of 8 May. These processes took place in the presence of party agents and independent observers hence ensuring transparency.

¹ South Africans voting for the first time since the country established democracy in 1994. They are between the ages of 18 and 20.E

Election personnel did not appear well trained on the counting procedures, resulting in a slow process lasting several hours to count and reconcile ballots. The slowness was also due to the fact that election personnel had worked throughout the day and appeared to be exhausted at the time of counting. The Mission also noted the length of time taken to sort out the ballot papers as some ballots were cast in the incorrect boxes.

Preliminary Recommendations

Based on its observations and findings, the Mission makes the following recommendations with the aim of contributing to the improvement of future electoral processes in South Africa:

- **Election materials:** The IEC should consider a logistical plan that takes into consideration the transportation, readiness of the warehouses, timing of delivery and security arrangements in order to ensure the timely delivery of materials to the polling stations.
- **Polling stations:** The Mission also recommends that the IEC considers increasing the number of polling stations to cater for the growing numbers of registered voters from one election to the next. About five to six polling staff members are required to professionally manage a polling station of a thousand voters.
- **Ballot boxes:** The Mission recommends the use of colour-coded ballot boxes for the different elections. This will make the process more user-friendly and will guide voters in the casting of their ballots. This can also prevent a possible mix-up of ballots which further prolongs the process of sorting the ballots during the counting process.
- **Training of polling officials:** There should be clearer guidelines on counting of ballots and training should be adequate to allow election officials to fully understand and apply these procedures consistently.

Conclusion

The Mission would like to congratulate the IEC for the efficient management of these elections and the people of South Africa for their overall peaceful conduct during the electoral process thus far. At the time of the release of this statement, the tabulation and announcement of results are still in progress. Therefore, our conclusion on the conduct of these elections is restricted to the period of our observation up to this day, 9 May 2014.

It is the hope of the Mission that the tabulation and announcement of the final results will be conducted in the same manner as the preceding stages so that the final electoral outcome can fully reflect the will of the South African electorate. EISA will continue to monitor the electoral process and will issue a final report in due course. A post-election edition of EISA's Election Updates will also be published in the next two weeks.