



**LAUNCH STATEMENT BY HONOURABLE ANNE SEMAMBA MAKINDA  
HEAD OF THE SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION (SEOM) TO THE  
PRESIDENTIAL AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF  
NAMIBIA**

**SAFARI COURT HOTEL (MERCURE, MOVENPICK)  
WINDHOEK**

**20<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2024**

**Distinguished Members of the SADC Organ Troika and SEAC;**

**Distinguished Representatives of the Government of the Republic of Namibia;**

**Chairperson and Representatives of the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN);**

**Distinguished Representatives of International Electoral Observation Missions;**

**Your Excellencies, Heads and Representatives of Diplomatic Missions Accredited to the Republic of Namibia;**

**SADC Election Observers;**

**Representatives and Leaders of Political Parties;**

**Representatives of Local Election Observers;**

**Religious Leaders and Members of the Civil Society;**

**Members of the Media;**

**Distinguished Guests;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

On behalf of Her Excellency Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania and Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, I welcome you to the launch of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to the Republic of Namibia. I am honoured to serve the Region as the Head of the SEOM to Namibia.

The people of Namibia are scheduled to participate in the Presidential and National Assembly Elections on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024. We understand that on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2024, some of those Namibian citizens who qualified to do so, cast their votes in, and beyond Namibia, as part of the arrangements for advance voting. On our SADC schedule, these elections are the last for the year 2024, in what has been an extremely busy electoral calendar. Despite some unfortunate developments that are receiving the appropriate attention, elections in the region have thus far been conducted in a peaceful and tolerant environment.

Allow me to recognize and express our gratitude to the personnel in the relevant Member States who worked tirelessly to ensure that the elections took place with minimum inconveniences, including the teams of election observers who spent weeks away from their families on regional duty.

**Distinguished Guests,**

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

SADC observes elections in Member States based on the *Revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2021)*. All SADC Member States affirmed their commitment to implement these Principles and Guidelines. The Principles and Guidelines provide an objective and scientific methodology for the observation of elections in order to contribute to the consolidation of democracy in the Region by enhancing best electoral practices and addressing any electoral shortcomings. These Principles and Guidelines are also informed by key instruments of the African Union (AU), such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance of 2007, and the relevant Conventions of the United Nations (UN).

Let me reiterate that the process of observing these elections is part of a cycle that does not involve just dropping into a country for a few days, meeting a few people in the hotel, issuing a statement, and disappearing until the next elections in five years.

In February 2023 the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) was here to assess the implementation of the recommendations that SADC made with respect to the elections that were held in 2019. This was not an exercise to just tick boxes and move on. The process of post-election reviews is designed to ensure that we all learn from the past, and we improve our electoral systems for the benefit of our citizens. We express our gratitude to all Namibians and other stakeholders who give us their time to sit with us and educate us on key issues about the country's elections and politics in general.

In this regard, the SEAC was again in Namibia between July-August 2024. The purpose of this working visit was to assess whether the political and security environment in the country was conducive for the holding of elections in conformity with the aforementioned Principles and Guidelines. SEAC's responsibilities were also to assess whether the legal framework governing elections is in place, and the ECN is prepared to conduct democratic elections. In addition to the interactions with a cross-section of stakeholders in Namibia, the SEAC received comprehensive briefings from the ECN, and was also enabled to view some last-minute voter registration activities in and around Windhoek.

## **Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Namibia has a comprehensive set of laws and policies that guide these elections, in particular, the Electoral Act and its various amendments. The SEOM recognizes the supremacy of the Constitution of Namibia above these laws and policies. While taking cognizance of these national legal instruments, the SADC Electoral Observation Mission will assess the conduct of the elections against a set of central principles that are stipulated in the revised *SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2021)*, such as:

- i. Full participation of the citizens in the democratic and development processes.

- ii. Enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms such as freedom of association, assembly and expression.
- iii. Observance of the provisions of relevant legal frameworks in relation to the date or period of elections.
- iv. Measures to prevent corruption, bribery, favouritism, political violence, intimidation and intolerance.
- v. Equal opportunity for all political parties to access the State Media as well as access to information by all citizens.
- vi. Respect for values of electoral justice such as integrity, impartiality and fairness.
- vii. No undue restraints against the opportunity to exercise the right to vote and be voted for.
- viii. Independence of the Judiciary and impartiality of the electoral institutions.
- ix. Capacitation and empowerment of citizens through civic and voter education.
- x. Acceptance of and respect for the election results by candidates and political parties as proclaimed to have been free, fair, transparent, credible and peaceful by the competent and Independent Electoral Commission in accordance with the law of the land; and
- xi. Provision of electoral justice through expedient settlement of electoral disputes as provided for in the law.

**Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

For the avoidance of doubt, it is necessary for me to outline the extent of our mandate as the SEOM. The SADC is a developing region with aspirations for regional integration, based on peace and security which is designed to support our socio-economic progress. Critical to peace and security are elections that are grounded on common standards which nobody else, but the SADC Member States set for themselves. These standards are to be adhered to by all Member States, and are the basis of the mandate of the SEOM, which includes the assessment of the following in each Member State holding elections:

- (i) whether the legal and constitutional framework guarantees freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of association and human rights.

- (ii) the structure and model of the electoral system, the Electoral Management Body (EMB), the Electoral Act and regulations and the nature of civil and political rights; and economic, social and cultural rights.
- (iii) the establishment, process of appointment and retention of members of EMBs; in addition to assessing the composition, status, independence, impartiality, professionalism and preparedness of the EMB for the election.
- (iv) the SEOM shall ensure that the delimitation of election boundaries was done in a manner acceptable to stakeholders, and whether the factors that prompted delimitation were in accordance with the laws of the land.
- (v) Whether the delimitation process was undertaken in accordance with the national law and without undue exclusion of particular groups or political interests.
- (vi) The procedures for nomination and provision of reasonable time frames to allow political parties and candidates to comply with the requirements of the registration process.
- (vii) The existence of a Code of Conduct governing all political parties and candidates.
- (viii) The neutrality of the security forces in providing election security; and the existence of requisite special voting facilities for security forces to enable them to cast their votes.
- (ix) The requirements and practices regarding direct and indirect access to the mass media for political parties, candidates, supporters and the general public;
- (x) The requirements and practices concerning reporting by state controlled, public and private media about political parties, candidates and supporters or opponents.
- (xi) The capacity and quality of civic and voter education programmes to afford all prospective voters accurate, comprehensible and adequate information upon which to make electoral choices.
- (xii) The extent to which the process enjoys the trust of the electorate, including inclusiveness, accuracy, and transparency, and whether the electorate are able to own and identify with the process.
- (xiii) The appropriateness of locations of polling stations, and adequacy and accessibility of their facilities.
- (xiv) The production and distribution to polling stations and storage of ballots and other sensitive election materials.

- (xv) The conduct of voting, including assistance to voters, counting, tabulation and announcement of results; the transparency of procedures and adequacy of safeguards against inaccuracies.
- (xvi) The conduct of procedures and processes concerning electoral complaints and challenges by citizens, prospective voters, and those seeking election, including the provision of effective remedies for violations of electoral related rights.

**Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In line with the SADC tradition, sister Member States have contributed personnel and resources to constitute the teams of observers under the SEOM. These observers are selected by individual Member States in accordance with criteria set out under the Principles and Guidelines. **The SEOM has a total of 65 observers drawn from the 8 SADC Members States, namely: Kingdom of Eswatini, the Republics of Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and the United Republic of Tanzania.**

The Observers will be deployed across all the 14 regions of Namibia, namely: ***Erongo, Hardap, Karas, Kavango West, Kavango East, Khomas, Kunene, Ohangwena, Omaheke, Omusati, Oshana, Oshikoto, Otjozondjupa and Zambezi.***

I urge all stakeholders to give some time to the SEOM observers as they move across your vast country to obtain a clear view of the electoral process.

Despite the bitterly fought struggle for independence, and against apartheid, Namibia emerged as one of the most peaceful communities in the world. Namibia has a strong tradition of peaceful and tolerant elections; this must be maintained for the long-term viability of this country and as an example to be emulated by others.

On behalf of the SADC Region and the Chairperson of the Organ, Her Excellency Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, I call upon all Namibians who made the effort to turn out to register to vote, to reward this effort by also turning out to vote peacefully on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024, and remain committed to peace in the post-election period.

Let me take this opportunity to invite all of you to attend the release of our Preliminary Statement regarding our observations of the Elections on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2024, at 1100hrs, at this venue.

**Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is now my honour and privilege, on behalf of the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, Her Excellency Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, to formally launch the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to the 2024 Presidential and National Assembly Elections in the Republic of Namibia.

***Thank You Very Much***  
***Merci Beaucoup***  
***Muito Obrigado***  
***Asante Sana***