



**Address to SADC Observers by Hon. Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister
of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South
Africa and Head of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to
the General Elections in Republic of Botswana on 24 October 2014**

**Fairground
Gaborone, Botswana
10 October 2014**

SADC Executive Secretary, Dr. Stergomena Lawrence Tax,
Heads of Delegations,
SADC Electoral Observers,

I must begin by thanking all of you for availing yourselves to serve SADC in this important mission whose objective is to strengthen democracy in our region. It is thanks to the likes of all of us that this region is among the shining lights of democracy on our continent. SADC is a region of peace and democracy because we have men and women of your caliber who are ready to leave their homes for regional assignments like the one you here to undertake.

I have just returned from Mozambique where I had the honour to launch the SADC Electoral Observation Mission in that country which is comprised of dedicated SADC citizens like yourselves.

It is an honour and a privilege that SADC has again entrusted South Africa with the chairing of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, with the support of other members of the Organ Troika – namely: Lesotho and Namibia.

When I look at the sea of faces before me, I cannot help but feel proud of SADC and our individual states. As a relatively young organisation, we have developed our own processes and traditions to entrench the principles of democracy and good governance in our region. The issue of observing elections has become part of that proud tradition by means of which we are consolidating democracy.

As you are aware, SADC has developed its own Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, in whose introduction our countries agree to build upon our common historical and cultural identity forged over centuries, and committed to a shared future.

The Guidelines remind us that in the SADC Treaty, we agree to abide by the principles of “human rights, democracy and the rule of law”, and to collectively “consolidate, defend and maintain democracy, peace, security, and stability” in the region. We are here to give affect to those undertakings.

As SADC Observers you will also be guided by the Constitution of Republic of Botswana, its Electoral Laws and the African Union norms and standards.

It is worthwhile to note that the budget for electoral observation missions is in part funded by SADC, but all countries present here each make an additional financial contribution.

Each one of our countries brings to the table its own experience of democracy. We enrich each other mutually in the preservation and upholding

of election practices that ensure that political participation is free and fair. This is indeed fulfilling the vision we expressed in the SADC Treaty to contribute to a shared future.

When we return to our own countries from observer missions, we are able to incorporate electoral methods and best practices we observed in other countries.

In Botswana, we will be able to observe practices honed and developed over decades of democracy. We would like to congratulate Botswana on its track record to date and its valued contribution to building democratic institutions in the region. We trust that the elections on 24 October 2014 will continue to build on this proud tradition.

At this point, I would like to make a few remarks about us as SADC. Over the last two years in particular, we have seen that our efforts have brought relief to some troubled areas in our region. We have successfully concluded facilitation efforts in Madagascar and Zimbabwe, followed by peaceful, transparent and participative elections in both those countries. We have made incredible strides towards bringing peace to the Great Lakes Region, where we have for the first time seen the coming together of the UN, SADC and the ICGLR. We now have a clear plan with stipulated milestones and spelled out responsibilities, largely due to SADC's active participation and involvement.

The reason I am highlighting these areas is twofold. Firstly, it demonstrates how SADC has developed such strong democratic institutions, that it is able to respond rapidly and effectively to situations that arise. Secondly, our investment and commitment to a common future is making the international community sit up and take note.

Recently, we have also been able to bring our collective experience as SADC to the situation in Lesotho and I would like to commend the outgoing Chair, Namibia, for its initial rapid response. As SADC, we have all come together to assist our sister country to find its way home and will shortly be able to observe their elections.

While recognizing that we are here as Member States we are here representing SADC and must work within the SADC frameworks. To this end, the code of conduct will be distributed to observers for your signature and commitment and discipline is required. Observers deployed will be expected to report on a daily basis on their engagements with political party candidates, civil society organisations, attendance of rallies, town hall meetings, public debates, and all other activities related to their functions as observers. These reports will be used by the Drafting Committee to compile the Preliminary Statement, which will be presented following the elections.

As SADC Election Observers we are contributing to a well established tradition which is one aspect of the elements that strengthens us as a regional economic community on the road to regional integration. It is a proud tradition, worthy of applause and my wish today, as I look at this mission, is that we as SADC will go from strength to strength.