



STATEMENT ON THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE
SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVER MISSION (SEOM)
TO THE GENERAL ELECTIONS

IN THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

BY

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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA AND HEAD OF
THE SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVER MISSION
(SEOM)

MASERU, 12 MAY 2012
LESOTHO SUN, CONVENTION CENTRE

- THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO, MRS LIMAKATSO MOKHOTHU,
- THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF SADC, DR TOMÁZ SALOMÃO,
- YOUR EXCELLENCIES, HEADS OF MISSION ACCREDITED TO THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO,
- MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS,
- LEADERS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF POLITICAL PARTIES,
- INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTION OBSERVER MISSIONS TO THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO,
- ESTEEMED MEMBERS OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS,
- ESTEEMED MEMBERS OF THE MEDIA,
- LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

Following an invitation by the Independent Electoral Commission of the Kingdom of Lesotho, the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, President Jacob Zuma, mandated the Executive Secretary of SADC, His Excellency Dr Tomaz Salomão, to constitute a SADC Electoral Observer Mission to the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Excellencies,

Article 5 of the SADC Treaty commits Member States to “promote common political values, systems and other shared values which are transmitted through institutions which are democratic, legitimate and effective’ and to “consolidate, defend and maintain democracy, peace, security and stability” in the region. By inviting the SADC to observe her Parliamentary Elections, the Kingdom of Lesotho illustrates her commitment to the consolidation of democracy in the region. The Mission is here today in support of these principles and the people of Lesotho.

Today’s launch is a significant milestone in SADC’s continued efforts to enhance peace, security and regional integration and the consolidation of political stability for the deserving people of Lesotho and the region. In this regard, we honour the Basotho for adhering to the requirement to undergo elections which are inclusive in participatory governance in line with the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

Distinguished Guests,

Let me at this point mention that the SADC Region has made and continues to make significant strides in ensuring the participation of citizens in decision making processes and the consolidation of democracy, democratic practice and institutions.

Our Mission will undertake its observation in three phases, namely, the pre-election, election-day and post-election phases of the electoral process. The Secretariat has already undertaken its pre-deployment Assessment Mission to the Kingdom of Lesotho and has been engaged and committed to support the people of the Kingdom of Lesotho as they go through this process on 26 May 2012.

In building democracy in the region, SADC has established an Election Advisory Council (SEAC) with the purpose of entrenching democracy in the region and building a solid foundation for the full adherence to the SADC Principles Governing Democratic Elections.

I am pleased to report that in fulfilling its mandate, the SEAC deployed a goodwill mission to Lesotho in March 2012 with the aim of assessing the level of progress towards the holding of elections in Lesotho.

Our Mission in Lesotho will be consulting widely at all levels with the major stakeholders to this election, including political parties, independent candidates, the Independent Electoral Commission, Police, Civil Society organizations, the media and others. We will, among other activities, observe and attend Political party election campaigns and rallies.

Excellencies,

The presence of the SADC Electoral Observer Mission is not only in support of the delivery of a credible, transparent and legitimate election by the Independent Electoral Commission, but at the same time provides a learning opportunity to the Member States that constitute our Mission to share with their Countries and replicate the best practices as observed from this election for the betterment of our region.

Ladies and gentleman, in the region and beyond, elections tend to present particular challenges in the minds and hearts of those involved, but all of them must be prepared to honourably and responsibly win or lose. In democracy there should be no enemies but competitors and therefore compatriots. The process must assure voters, and those voted for, to honourably accept the people's verdict. We therefore encourage the people of the Kingdom of Lesotho to continue to demonstrate political maturity and responsibility by respecting democratic principles and practices.

I would like to urge the Stakeholders in this election, especially the contesting Political Parties and candidates, to exercise political tolerance during their campaigns leading up to the polls, on polling day on 26 May 2012, and also after the elections.

We would like to implore the Stakeholders in this election to adhere to and respect the rule of law so as to continue with the peace and tranquility that the Kingdom of Lesotho is known for in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We wish the Basotho well as they go through these elections.

With these remarks, I wish to announce on behalf of the Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation and President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma, that the SADC Electoral Observer Mission to the 26 May 2012 Parliamentary Elections in the Kingdom of Lesotho is officially launched.

Ke ea leboha!