



**STATEMENT ON THE LAUNCH OF THE SADC ELECTORAL
OBSERVATION MISSION (SEOM) TO THE 2015 PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTIONS**

IN

THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

BY

**H.E. DR. STERGOMENA LAWRENCE TAX, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
OF SADC**

LUSAKA, 10 JANUARY 2015

- Honourable Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister for International Relations and Co-operation of the Republic of South Africa; Chairperson of SADC Ministerial Committee of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation (MCO); and Head of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to the Republic of Zambia 2015 Presidential Elections;
- Honourable Ellen Molekane Deputy Minister for State Security of the Republic of South Africa;
- Honourable Mrs Justice Irene Mambilima Chairperson of the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ);
- Amb Tebello J Metsing, representing the incoming Chairperson, Lesotho
- Amb Nicky Nashandi , representing the outgoing Chairperson, Namibia
- Distinguished Leaders and Representatives of Political Parties;
- Your Excellencies, Heads and members of Diplomatic Missions accredited to the Republic of Zambia;
- Distinguished Religious leaders and Representatives;
- Distinguished Members of Civil Society;
- Distinguished representation of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council

- SADC Electoral Observers;
- Members of the media;
- Ladies and gentlemen.

It is my privilege and honour to welcome you to this launch of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to the 2015 Presidential Elections in the Republic of Zambia, to be held on 20 January. In the same vein, I am delighted to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for your presence here at this very important event. While here in Zambia to observe the 2015 Presidential Elections, we still remember the demise of the late President of the Republic of Zambia, His Excellency Mr Michael Sata that has led to the holding of these 2015 Presidential Elections. The passing away of the late Michael Sata, a brave son of Southern Africa, a great and dedicated leader is a loss not only to Zambia, but also to the Region as a whole. We express our sympathy and pray for strength to the family and people of Zambia.

Madame Chairperson,

We thank the Republic of Zambia for inviting SADC to observe the 2015 Presidential Elections. In accordance with the provisions of the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections; the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, His Excellency Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, has constituted the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM), which is being officially launched here today, to observe the 2015 Zambia Presidential Elections. The SEOM Observers, comprised

of observers from various Member States, will be deployed across the country during the electoral period.

SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, and other international best practices provide an important framework and benchmark for the promotion of the universal values of Democracy, good governance, rule of law and human rights in the region and continent.

It is gratifying to note that the SADC region has made steady progress in the consolidation of Democracy. Consolidating Democracy and Peace has been possible due to among other things, the participation of SADC citizens in political processes and governance, and by according citizens an opportunity to elect leaders of their choice.

Zambia has a long standing tradition of holding elections, spanning over several decades since 1959. The high turn-out of voters which has been recorded in previous elections is a clear testimony to democracy in Zambia; upholding the democratic values and principles, and willingness of citizens to participate in political processes.

We call upon the SADC region to emulate the experience and example of Zambia in organizing and managing electoral processes, thus forming part of the region's best practices governing democratic elections.

Madame Chairperson,

As per our norm, the deployment of SEOM in Zambia was preceded by the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) goodwill and pre-deployment assessment mission, undertaken from 4 to 7 January 2015.

The SEAC mission sought to ascertain the level of preparedness and readiness of the country to hold the forthcoming Presidential Elections.

The SEAC political goodwill and pre-deployment assessment mission concluded that the political atmosphere and security environment are conducive for holding elections in the Republic of Zambia. With respect to preparedness and readiness, the electoral management bodies have undertaken the necessary provisions and preparations for holding the 2015 Presidential Elections.

While Zambia has a long standing electoral tradition, the deployment of SEOM aims at supporting the democratic processes in the country, as well as ensuring that the provisions of the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections are adhered to in the conduct of democratic elections.

It is worth noting that for a peaceful, free, fair, transparent and credible electoral process, the adherence to democratic values and principles as well as the guiding legislation by all relevant stakeholders involved in the electoral process and society in general is fundamental. It is also the responsibility of all stakeholders. We appeal to all stakeholders to uphold democratic values and principles, and the rule of law that governs electoral processes in the Republic of Zambia.

Madame Chairperson.

In discharging its mandate, the conduct of the Observer Mission will be guided by the SADC Treaty; the SADC Protocol on Political, Defence and Security Cooperation; the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections; and relevant legislation of the Republic

of Zambia, and other continental and international instruments governing democratic elections.

In fulfilling its mandate, and being part of best practices, SEOM will interact and share information with other Election Observation Missions deployed in the country. Consultations with stakeholders involved in the electoral process will also be undertaken by the Mission.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am pleased to inform you that the operations of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) in the Republic of Zambia will be conducted from its Headquarters located at Cresta Golfview Hotel in Lusaka. The next ten days will be of intense labour for our Observers, aimed at gathering information on the electoral process; after which the Mission will once again meet on 22 December 2015, here in this very same venue, to present its Statement on the findings and observations regarding the 2015 Presidential Elections in the Republic of Zambia.

Madame Chairperson,

My role is to give introductory and welcoming remarks. In this regard, having welcomed our distinguished invitees, it is now my honour to introduce and invite the Head of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to the 2015 Presidential Elections in the Republic of Zambia, Honourable Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister for International Relations and Co-operation of the Republic of South Africa, Chairperson of SADC Ministerial Committee of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation (MCO) to now proceed with the official launch of the Mission.

Everyone will agree with me that 2014 and 2015 have been very hectic to our Chairperson. She has led four Electoral Observers Missions in a span of three months during 2014 after taking over leadership of the Organ, and every mission has been very successful. This is the fifth SEOM Mission over the course of just four months. We thank you very much for your dedication, the hard work, and exemplary leadership.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.