



**DRAFT LAUNCH STATEMENT BY HONOURABLE MIZENGO KAYANZA PETER PINDA
FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA, AND
HEAD OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY ELECTORAL
OBSERVATION MISSION (SEOM) TO THE 30TH OCTOBER 2024 GENERAL ELECTIONS
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

AVANI HOTEL, GABORONE

22ND OCTOBER, 2024

Distinguished Members of the SADC Organ-Troika;

His Excellency, Mr. Elias Magosi, the Executive Secretary of SADC;

Distinguished Members of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC);

Distinguished Representatives of the Government of the Republic of Botswana;

Chairperson and Representatives of the Independent Electoral Commission of the Republic of Botswana;

Distinguished Representatives of International Electoral Observation Missions;

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

Ms. Hilda Modisane, Executive Secretary of the ECF-SADC;

Dr. Adane Ghebremeskel, *Security and Governance Project Manager for GIZ;*

SADC Election Observers;

Representatives of Local Election Observers;

Religious Leaders and Members of the Civil Society;

Members of the Media;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my honour and privilege to welcome you all to the official launch of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) on behalf of **Her Excellency Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the Republic of the United Republic of Tanzania, and the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation.**

As per the long-standing tradition amongst SADC Member States, we are here at the invitation of the Government of the Republic of Botswana to observe her General Elections on 30th October 2024. Our presence here today, is an act of solidarity that is invariably reciprocated.

**Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

SADC observes elections in its Member States, based on the *Revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2021)*. All SADC Member States affirmed their commitment to implementing these Principles and Guidelines. The Principles and Guidelines provide an objective and scientific methodology for observing elections to contribute to the consolidation of democracy in the Region by enhancing best electoral practices and addressing any electoral shortcomings. The 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, as well as the relevant Conventions of the United Nations (UN).

In compliance with provisions of the *SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2021)* (hereinafter referred to as the *Principles and Guidelines*), and the *SEAC Structures, Rules and Procedures*, the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) undertook a Pre-Election Goodwill Assessment Mission to Botswana from 22nd - 29th April, 2024. The objective of the Mission was to assess whether the political and security environments in the country were conducive for holding elections in conformity with the Principles and Guidelines, whether the legal framework governing the elections is in place, whether the delimitation of the constituencies or boundaries was done in accordance with the law of the country, and whether the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of Botswana is prepared to conduct democratic elections.

This process included interactions with stakeholders from a cross-section of Botswana society including; political parties, civil society organizations, electoral experts, faith-based organizations and the diplomatic community.

**Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We also pay particular attention to the Constitution and Electoral Laws of the Republic of Botswana. It is also necessary to explain that based on 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*, such as:-

Full participation of the citizens in the democratic and development processes:

- (i) Freedom of association, assembly and expression;
Observance of the provisions of relevant legal frameworks in relation to the date or period of elections;
- (ii) Measures to prevent corruption, bribery, favouritism, political violence, intimidation and intolerance;

- (iii) Equal opportunity for all political parties to access the State Media as well as access to information by all citizens;
- (iv) Respect for values of electoral justice such as integrity, impartiality and fairness;
- (v) No undue restraints against the opportunity to exercise the right to vote and be voted for;
- (vi) Independence of the Judiciary and impartiality of the electoral institutions;
- (vii) To build capacity and empower citizens through civic and voter education;
- (viii) 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
- (ix) Provision of electoral justice through expedited settlement of electoral disputes as provided for in the law.

**Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

All stakeholders must understand that the mandate of the SEOM is to determine the adherence of the Member State holding elections to the relevant provisions of the *Revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2021)*. In this respect, please allow me to go into some detail for the benefit of all.

To fulfil its mandate, the SEOM assesses and evaluates the following, amongst others:

- (i) Whether the legal and constitutional framework guarantees freedom of expression, assembly, 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 that the factors that prompted delimitation were in accordance with the laws of the land;
- (v) Whether the delimitation process undertaken following National law 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 state-controlled, public, and private media reporting about political parties, candidates, supporters, or opponents;
- (xi) The capacity and quality of civic and voter education programmes to afford all prospective voters accurate, comprehensible and adequate information to make electoral choices;
- (xii) The extent to which the process enjoys the electorate's trust, including inclusiveness, accuracy, and transparency, and whether the electorate can own and identify with the process;
- (xiii) The appropriateness of locations of polling stations, as well as the 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 assisting voters, counting, tabulating and announcing results; the transparency of procedures and adequacy of safeguards against inaccuracies; and
- (xvi) The conduct of procedures and processes concerning electoral complaints and challenges by citizens, prospective voters, and those seeking election, including providing effective remedies for violations of electoral-related rights.

**Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The composition of SEOM, which includes Troika, SEAC, Secretariat support staff, and Observers is a total of 72 delegates. The Observers come from **10 SADC Member States, namely: United Republic of Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kingdoms of Eswatini and Lesotho, and the Republics of Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.** In this respect, SEOM will be deployed to all the districts, towns, and cities of the Republic of Botswana.

**Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We are here to help each other improve the quality of our elections and the quality of our hard-fought struggle for liberty and democracy. At the end of this process, we will issue our Preliminary Statement for SEOM Botswana at this venue on 1st November 2024. The final report of SEOM Botswana 2024 will be submitted to the Government of the Republic of Botswana 30 days after the closure of the polls. At the Ministerial Committee of the Organ (MCO), SADC Secretariat reports every year in June/July about the following:

- (i) Follow up on Member States to consider and expedite the implementation of SEOM recommendations through SEAC; and
- (ii) Urged all Member States to report annually on the implementation of the recommendations of the SEOM, including challenges faced and the support required to achieve full implementation thereof.

On behalf of the SADC Region and the Chairperson of the Organ, I call upon all registered voters to turn out peacefully in large numbers to cast their votes on 30th October 2024. In the remaining days to this significant date, SADC also calls upon all to act maturely, respect competing political views, and exercise responsibility in the post-election phase whether or not one's favoured political party or candidate emerges as the people's choice.

May I also take this opportunity to invite you all to attend the release of our Preliminary Statement regarding our observations of the 30th October 2024 at this venue on 1st November 2024 at 11H00.

**Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, Her Excellency Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the Republic of the United Republic of Tanzania, I now formally launch the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to the 30th October 2024 General Elections of the Republic of Botswana.

**Asante Sana!
Thank You Very Much!
Merci Beaucoup!
Muito Obrigada!
Ke a leboga!**