



**SADC ELECTION OBSERVER MISSION (SEOM)**

INTERIM STATEMENT

ISSUED BY

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MINISTER IN THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT FOR DIPLOMATIC  
AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOZAMBIQUE

AND

HEAD OF THE SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVER MISSION

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The Treaty establishing the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, the Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ (SIPO) and the Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections commit SADC Member States to promote democratic values, develop and consolidate democratic institutions and practices with the aim to ensure an effective and efficient participation of the citizens in the affairs of their states. Despite being at different stages and moving at different pace, the ultimate goal of all SADC Member States is achieving a pluralist political system based on the universal principles of democracy.

It is in this endeavour that the Kingdom of Swaziland enacted its new Constitution in 2005 and accordingly decided to hold its first Parliamentary elections under the present Constitution. As it has been an established practice and a political value of SADC, the Government of His Majesty King Mswati III extended an invitation for SADC to come and observe these elections. Hence, His Excellency Armando Emílio Guebuza, the Deputy Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation was requested to lead and coordinate the Mission.

In line with the SADC Principles and Guidelines, the Deputy Chairperson mandated the Executive Secretary to invite all Member States and constitute the Mission. He also appointed the Honourable Francisco Caetano Madeira to lead the Mission.

The Mission, comprising of a total of 60 members, was established on 5<sup>th</sup> and launched on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2008. It deployed field teams in all four regions of the Kingdom.

In carrying out their activities, the members of the Mission acquainted

themselves with the Constitution and other laws and regulations governing the electoral process in the Kingdom of Swaziland. The members and the leader of the Mission interacted with civil society, the media, the Electoral and Boundaries Commission, members of the Government, the law enforcement agents and other international observer missions. These interactions allowed the Mission served to compare notes and deepen its understanding of the electoral process. While in the field, the Mission interacted with members of the various communities and candidates. This also allowed the Mission to have a sense of voter/candidate interaction, the level of freedom and safety of the electorate as well as of the candidates.

During this exercise, the Mission observed many issues pertaining to these elections. These include inter alia, the following:

1. The Electoral System is unique in a sense that it is based on a community censored individual merit and unfolds in two tears, the first of which SADC was not involved because it was regarded as Primary, and the second and final which SADC has just witnessed.
2. The voter's roll is also unique as it uses the Optimum Mark Recognition (OMR). This prevents potential double voting and non-existent voters;
3. The campaign was characterized by an opened interaction between the candidates and the electorate unlike the classic rally model which indicates high level of mutual acknowledgement;

With regard to the voting process, the Mission noted that:

1. Polling stations were located in neutral places such as schools, Churches and civic centres;
2. Voters were provided with the transport to and from the polling stations which allowed all citizens who wished to vote to do so timeously;
3. Polling stations opened and closed at a prescribed time and the

proceedings unfolded in an orderly manner and both electoral officials and voters behaved in a civic way that characterises the true African spirit. This indicates that voters were able to exercise their franchise peacefully, freely and unhindered;

4. Every participant from election officials, candidate agents, police officers, candidates and voters were very relaxed and no sign of anxiety or tension could be observed;
5. The electoral officials performed their duties in a competent, professional, efficient and effective manner;
6. There was an enthusiastic adherence of the electorate such that by midday, most voters had casted their votes;

The Mission noted that the vote counting was transparent as the process was witnessed by the candidates and their agents, international and local observers as well as the law enforcement agents.

The SADC Observer Mission however, wishes to make a few recommendations with a view to improving the electoral system in the future. These include, among others, the following:

1. Considering the possibility of improving electoral system particularly on the secrecy of the vote;
2. the extension of the period between the primary and the secondary elections in order to ensure the conclusion of possible court cases before the final stage;
3. Considering the polling stations to be also counting stations and the process should be continuous;
4. Consider using transparent ballot boxes;
5. Improvement of civic education and voting procedures especially to cater for the senior and physically challenged citizens;

The overall conclusion of the SADC Electoral Observer Mission is that the elections were free, peaceful, transparent and credible. The Mission is therefore, pleased to congratulate the People of the Kingdom of Swaziland for the lesson of civility, good behaviour, mutual tolerance and, above all, for the tremendous efforts to reach the perfection as they embark on their gradual and challenging road for the entrenchment of democracy. It is SADC's view that the elections reflected the will of the people of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

We believe that the lessons we learned here will significantly contribute to further enhance our collective resolve to abide by the universal principles of democracy which are consistent with the reality of the day.

Manzini, 20<sup>th</sup> September 2008