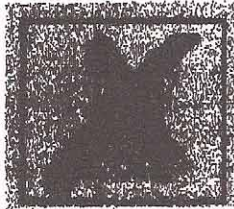
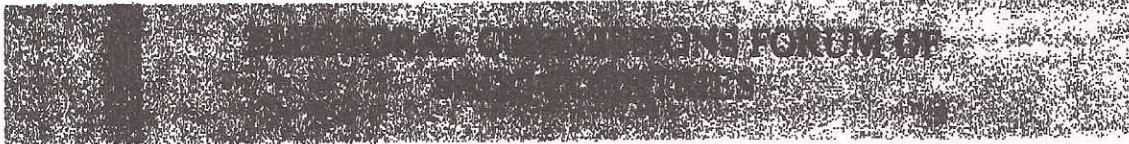


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THE PRELIMINARY STATEMENT OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISSIONS FORUM OF SADC COUNTRIES (ECF-SADC) ON THE SEYCHELLES PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION MAY 2011

INTRODUCTION

The Electoral Commissions Forum (ECF) of the SADC countries received an invitation letter dated 22nd February 2011 from the Electoral Commissioner of Seychelles to observe the Presidential Election to be held from the 19th-21st May 2011 in the Republic of Seychelles.

In response to this invitation, the ECF duly deployed to Seychelles, a 21 Member Observer Mission represented by Electoral Commissions from Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia, Zanzibar and Zimbabwe, with the first delegates arriving in the island of Mahé, Seychelles on the 11th May 2011. The Mission was led by Mr Victor Tonchi, the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission of Namibia.

The ECF Mandate

The ECF, comprising all 15 SADC member states' Electoral Commissions, was launched in July 1998 and is governed by a Constitution. Among its various functions and activities, the ECF's mandate includes the following:

- To strengthen co-operation amongst Electoral Commissions in the SADC region;
- To promote conditions conducive to free, fair and transparent elections in the SADC region;

The ECF views election observation as an important component of promoting democratic elections and consolidating democracy in the SADC region. The rationale for the Forum's elections observation, therefore, is to assist fellow Election Management Bodies identify areas needing improvement in elections administration.

Pre-Poll Mission activities

1. The Mission met with the Electoral Commissioner of Seychelles on the 16th May 2011 who provided it with a comprehensive brief on their preparedness and readiness to conduct the elections. The Mission also observed the packing of election material for delivery to the electoral areas.
2. On the 17th May 2011, the Mission organized a briefing session from stakeholders including the media fraternity, academia, and Civil Society Organizations. This seminar provided the Mission with information on the context within which elections were taking place. The following concerns were brought up by the local stakeholders as they interacted with the Mission:

- The need for the establishment of an Electoral Commission in place of a single Electoral Commissioner;
 - The need for a more systematic continuous voter education programme;
 - The need for accreditation of domestic observers;
 - The regular updating of the voters roll;
 - Complaints about defacement or destruction of party advertisement materials;
 - Allegations about instances of undue influence over voters;
 - Allegations about political bias in the public media, even though there is a requirement that all candidates be allocated equal free air time.
3. The Mission also met with the SADC Mission leader to discuss issues of mutual interest pertaining to election observation.
 4. The Mission attended the last political rally of the ruling party on the 15th May 2011.
 5. The Mission met with two opposition parties (the New Democratic Party and Seychelles National Party on the 18th May 2011, to get their perspectives on the election).
 6. The Mission met with Heads of other observer Missions on the 21st May 2011 to reflect on polling day and observations. The meeting was organized by the SADC Observer Mission.

Deployment

The Mission divided itself into six teams which covered all electoral areas on the island of Mahe. Five members of the Mission covered nine outer islands of Seychelles.

Overview of the Poll

The Mission observed the following on the polling day:

- Generally, polling stations opened on time and opening procedures were adhered to.
- The polling staff was adequately trained and handled the voting process with professionalism and efficiency.
- Electoral officers were appointed from the private and public sectors.
- The voting process was peaceful, orderly and free of intimidation and the voters cast their ballots without any visible difficulties.
- The secrecy of the ballot was safe guarded at every polling station that was visited;
- The layout of polling stations was uniform throughout, with tables of polling staff properly labelled.
- The polling staff was provided with meals. This was appreciated as a good practice.
- International observers and party agents, were present when voting started at 0700hours.
- There were no domestic observers at the polling stations.
- Police officers were present and provided security when needed.
- There were polling officers assigned to assist the disabled and voting booths were provided for the disabled.
- The closing procedures were adhered to with international observers and party agents overseeing the process.

Counting Process and Results

- Counting was carried out efficiently in the presence of party agents and international observers;
 - Counting was done meticulously with double counts of batches of ballots;
 - The Presiding Electoral Officer and the party agents at each polling station signed the document verifying the overall count and each party agent was provided with a copy of this document;
 - The results at each polling station were expeditiously transmitted to the Electoral Commissioner;
 - The Electoral Commissioner announced the results of the poll in the early hours of 22 May 2011 in the presence of those political party candidates and representatives who chose to be present.
- There were no logistical challenges (such as running short of electoral materials) that could have material effect in the conduct of the poll).

Recommendations

Against the foregoing observations, the Mission recommends the following to the Electoral Commissioner of Seychelles:

1. The need for the establishment of an Electoral Commission.
2. The need for continuous updating of voters roll.
3. Consideration for the review of the nomination process of candidates.

Conclusion

The Electoral Commissions Forum of SADC countries submit that:

- The Electoral Commissioner of Seychelles was ready and prepared to conduct the elections;
- It was evident from the high voter turnout that voters enthusiastically participated in the election, showing that they had trust in the processes;
- The people of Seychelles were able to exercise their democratic right to vote in a dignified and peaceful manner;
- The Electoral Commissioner of Seychelles did a good job and that Seychelles held credible democratic Presidential elections.

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Mr Victor L. Tonchi
Mission Leader
Electoral Commissions Forum of SADC countries

23rd May 2011, Victoria, Seychelles

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Forum Presidency: Dr B. Bam - President (RSA), Rev. A. Malumalu - Vice President (DRC)
EXCO: Chairperson: Prof Joao Leopoldo da Costa (Mozambique) - Vice Chairperson: Justice S. Mutambanengwe (Zimbabwe), Advocate
Suzana Ant6nio da Concei7o Nicolau Ingl6s (Angola), Justice S. Oeongaloiwe (Botswana), Dr V. Tonchi (Namibia), Hendrick Gappy (Seychelles), Justice L. Makame (Tanzania).