



**LAUNCH STATEMENT BY HIS HONOUR DR. NEVERS MUMBA, FORMER VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA AND HEAD OF THE SADC ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION (SEOM)**

**TO THE 2023 HARMONISED ELECTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE**

**HARARE, 18<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2023**

**Distinguished Members of the SADC Organ Troika;**

**Distinguished Representatives of the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe**

**Your Excellencies, Heads and Representatives of the Diplomatic Missions  
accredited to the Republic of Zimbabwe;**

**Mr. Terry Rose, Representative of His Excellency, Mr. Elias Magosi, the  
Executive Secretary of SADC and Director of the Organ;**

**Chairperson/Representatives and Members of the Independent Electoral  
Commission;**

**Distinguished Representatives of International Electoral Observation Missions;**

**Members of the SADC Electoral Advisory Council;**

**SADC Election Observers;**

**Leaders and Representatives of Political Parties;**

**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 to the official launch of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia, and the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank the Independent Electoral Commission of the Republic of Zimbabwe, for the invitation extended to SADC to observe the Harmonized Elections scheduled to take place on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2023, in the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Before I proceed, allow me to inform you that since the arrival of the SADC team in Harare on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2023, and my arrival on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2023, we have observed a general calm and peace; and for that we commend the Government and the people of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

**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 the implementation of these Principles and Guidelines. The Principles and Guidelines provide an objective and scientific methodology for the observation of 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, such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007), as well as the relevant Conventions of the United Nations.

**Distinguished Guests  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Consistent with the revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, the deployment of this SEOM was preceded by a Pre-Election Assessment Goodwill Mission to the Republic of Zimbabwe by the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) from 12 to 19 April 2023. Precedent to this Assessment Goodwill Mission, the SEAC had also conducted a post-election review to assess if, and how recommendations arising from the SEOM observations of the Harmonized Elections of 2018 have been implemented.

In view of the prevailing peace in the country, the pre-election assessment mission conducted by the SEAC concluded that the Republic of Zimbabwe is prepared to hold the Harmonized Elections.

**Distinguished Guests  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM), like I mentioned earlier on, has been in Zimbabwe since 10<sup>th</sup> August 2023 to observe the elections set for 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2023, which are for the purpose of electing the President; members of the National Assembly; and members of Local Government. The SEOM noted that, the elections are governed by the Constitution of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and a comprehensive set of relevant laws, as contained in the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No.20) Act of 2013.

It is in line with these national legal instruments, that the SADC Electoral Observation Mission will assess the conduct of the elections against a set of principles stipulated in the revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, such as:

1. Full participation of the citizens in the democratic and development processes;
2. Enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms such as freedom of association, assembly and expression;
3. Observance of the provisions of relevant legal frameworks in relation to the date or period of elections;
4. Measures to prevent corruption, bribery, favouritism, political violence, intimidation and intolerance;
5. Equal opportunity for all political parties to access the State Media as well as access to information by all citizens;
6. Respect for values of electoral justice such as integrity, impartiality and fairness;
7. No undue restraints against the opportunity to exercise the right to vote and be voted for;
8. Independence of the Judiciary and impartiality of the electoral institutions;
9. Capacitation and empowerment of citizens through civic and voter education;
10. Acceptance of and respect for the election results by 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
11. Provision of electoral justice through expedient settlement of electoral disputes as provided for in the law.

**Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am pleased to inform you that the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to the 2023 Harmonised Elections in the Republic of Zimbabwe consists of 68 personnel. They are from 9 SADC Member States, namely, Republic of Angola, Republic of Botswana, Kingdom of Eswatini, Republic of Malawi, Republic of Mozambique, Republic of Namibia, Republic of South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, and Republic of Zambia.

Our observers have been deployed to the 10 Provinces of Zimbabwe, namely, Harare, Bulawayo, Masvingo, Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South, Midlands, Manicaland, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland Central and Mashonaland West. The SEOM observations will focus on the pre-election, election and post-election periods, which include political parties campaigns; the voting day and the process of the counting of the ballot papers. To that end, the SEOM has two components, Short-

Term Observation (STO) covering the period 10<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> August 2023, and Long-Term Observation (LTO), covering the period 25<sup>th</sup> August – 01<sup>st</sup> September 2023.

We started stakeholder engagements in earnest since our arrival in Harare to appreciate the political, legal and security situation in the context of the elections in order to better inform the Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation, His Excellency Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia.

**Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

SADC urges all registered voters to exercise their civic and political rights by going out to vote on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2023. We encourage all stakeholders to ensure that these elections are conducted in a peaceful, free, fair, transparent and credible manner. We look forward to an electoral process that adheres to democratic values and principles envisioned in the SADC Treaty, the Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation; and the revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

May I at this juncture take this opportunity to invite you all to attend the release of our Preliminary Statement regarding our observations of the Elections, on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2023, at this very venue.

It is now my honour, on behalf of the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, His Excellency Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia, to formally launch the SADC Electoral Observation Mission to the 2023 Harmonized Elections in the Republic of Zimbabwe.

***Thank you very much  
Muito Obrigado  
Merci beaucoup  
Asante Sana  
Tatenda***