



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

IN

THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

BY

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

MASERU, 18 FEBRUARY 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 Kingdom of Lesotho 2015 National Assembly Elections;
- Deputy Minister for State Security of the Republic of South Africa;
- Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC);
- Members of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC);
- Representative of the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho;
- Leaders and Representatives of Political Parties;
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
- Election Observation Missions;
- Religious leaders;
- Members of Civil Society;
- Members of the media;
- Ladies and gentlemen.

It is my singular honour to welcome you to the launch of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to the 2015 National Assembly Elections in the Kingdom of Lesotho, which are scheduled to take place on 28th February 2015. I am also pleased to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for your presence at this important event.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In accordance with our long standing democratic tradition, and in compliance with the provisions of the *SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections*, the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho invited SADC to observe the forthcoming National Assembly Elections.

Following that invitation, the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, His Excellency Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, constituted the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM), which we are launching here this morning.

These elections are taking place at a time when the great people of this Kingdom, with assistance from SADC, are making commendable efforts in search of lasting and sustainable peace, security and political stability in the Kingdom of Lesotho.

As part of the regional collective efforts to support our Basotho brothers and sisters to achieve durable political stability and security, SADC has deployed the SADC Observation Mission to Lesotho (SOMILES).

Our presence here today, once again conveys our commitment to render support to the on-going political process in the Kingdom of Lesotho. This launch is a manifestation of the solidarity, brotherhood and sisterhood that exist between the Kingdom of Lesotho and other SADC Member States. It is a clear testimony of our commitment to our shared values, our shared vision, and our shared mission to bring peace, political stability, socio-economic development and deep rooted regional integration to the peoples of this region.

Indeed, the presence of SADC here today is also to ensure that the provisions of the *SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections* are adhered to in the conduct of democratic elections.

To that effect, SEOM Observers will be deployed across all ten districts of the Kingdom of Lesotho, cover extensively all electoral processes in the country before, during and after the Election Day.

Furthermore, the conduct of the 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, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance; and the relevant legislations of the Kingdom of Lesotho, as well as other international instruments and best practices.

Prior to the deployment of SEOM, the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) undertook a goodwill and pre-deployment assessment mission to the Kingdom of Lesotho, from 1st to 6th February 2015. The SEAC mission sought to ascertain the level of preparedness and readiness of the country to hold the forthcoming National Assembly Elections.

The SEAC report confirmed that the political atmosphere and security environment are conducive for holding elections; and the electoral management bodies have undertaken the necessary provisions and preparations for holding the 2015 National Assembly Elections in the Kingdom of Lesotho.

It is important to underscore that the responsibility for ensuring a peaceful, free, fair and credible electoral process lies with all stakeholders in this country. These include all contesting political parties, religious and civic organisations, state and non-state institutions, the voters and indeed every Mosotho.

I am pleased to inform you that the operations of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) in the Kingdom of Lesotho will be conducted from its Headquarters located at LESOTHO SUN HOTEL, in Maseru.

During the next ten days the Observers will be deployed throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom to gather information on the electoral process; after which the Mission will convene, once again, here in this very same venue, on 2nd March 2015, to present its Preliminary Statement on the findings and observations regarding the 2015 National Assembly Elections in the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is now my honour and privilege to introduce and invite the Head of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission (SEOM) to the 2015 National Assembly Elections in the Kingdom of Lesotho, Honourable Maite

Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister for International Relations and Co-operation of the Republic of South Africa, and Chairperson of SADC Ministerial Committee of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation (MCO) to officially launch of the SADC Electoral Observation Mission.

I thank you.