



**SADC ELECTION OBSERVER MISSION
(SEOM)**

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

PRESENTED BY

THE HON. JOSÉ MARCOS BARRICA

MINISTER OF YOUTH AND SPORTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF ANGOLA

AND HEAD OF THE SEOM

ON THE ZIMBABWE PRESIDENTIAL RUNOFF AND HOUSE OF

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BY- ELECTIONS

HELD ON 27 JUNE 2008

1. INTRODUCTION

On 2 May 2008 the results of the Presidential election were finally announced. None of the four candidates received an outright majority required by the Electoral Act. Accordingly, on 19 May 2008, ZEC announced that a run-off election would be held on 27 June 2008 between the candidates of the MDC, Mr Morgan Tsvangirai and the ZANU-PF, Mr Robert Gabriel Mugabe, who had secured 47.9 percent and 43.2 percent of the votes respectively.

The ZEC also announced that by-elections would be held on the same day in the Gwanda South, Pelandaba-Mpopoma and Redcliff Constituencies where elections could not proceed on 29 March 2008 due to the death of candidates before the election date.

The SADC was, again, invited by the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe to observe these elections in terms of the SADC Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation, and the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

Following this invitation, the Chairperson of SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation (OPDSC), His Excellency Eng. José Eduardo dos Santos, President of the Republic of Angola, officially constituted the SEOM and mandated the Executive Secretary, Dr. Tomás Augusto Salomão, to organize its deployment. The Chairperson of the OPDSC, appointed Hon. Jose Marcos Barrica, Minister of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Angola to head SEOM.

Pursuant to this mandate, Diplomatic Missions of SADC Member States accredited to Zimbabwe assumed the role of an advanced team. After the necessary logistical and administrative preparation the full SADC Electoral Observer Mission was re-deployed to Harare from 28th May 2008.

The SEOM maintained contact with other international observer missions such as the African Union (AU), and the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), and UN Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs. During these interactions, notes were exchanged.

As part of their fieldwork, SADC observers were deployed to all provinces in Zimbabwe. The observers interacted with political parties and candidates canvassing for support, ZEC officials, non-governmental organisations, police officers and citizens.

2. DEPLOYMENT

The Mission observed these elections in line with SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

During the pre-voting period, the ZEC, despite operating under a politically charged environment, was able to prepare for the election by among other things, handling of postal votes, training of electoral officers, the setting up of polling stations, and delivery of voting materials.

The SEOM consisted of 413 members from all SADC Member States, except Madagascar. They were deployed into ten (10) provinces which were divided into 210 constituencies and 9 100 polling stations. The background of the members of the Mission ranged from parliamentarians of both ruling and opposition parties, members of civil society and civil servants. Field teams were, as far as possible, composed and deployed in a manner that made them representative of Member States.

The SADC Mission conducted its observation in a rigorous and systematic manner. Field teams submitted daily reports which were consolidated and analysed by members of the SADC Secretariat. Allegations raised with the SEOM were, likewise, pursued in a systematic manner through further observations and requests for further information from the relevant authorities or role-players. Based on the foregoing the SEOM wishes to report on the following observations and findings

3. OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS PRE-ELECTION PHASE

Politically motivated violence and intimidation

The period leading up to the run-off election was characterized by politically motivated violence resulting in loss of life, damage to property, and serious injuries sustained and hindering political activities.

All role-players acknowledged the existence of politically motivated violence but differed regarding the nature, extent, causes and origins of this violence and its impact on the electoral process. On numerous occasions victims of politically motivated violence allege that the security forces did very little to stop the violence or arrest the perpetrators of violence.

The prevalence of politically motivated violence was uneven, being most acute in Mashonaland East, West and Central, Manicaland, Masvingo, and Harare. This politically motivated violence led to the internal displacement of persons and impacted negatively on the full participation of citizens in the political process and freedom of association.

On 25 June 2008 the Head of SEOM issued a statement expressing its deep concern on widespread politically motivated violence, and appealed to the relevant authorities, particularly supporters of political parties and candidates to refrain from all forms of violence. The Mission also urged the law enforcement agencies to ensure that there was law and order in the country.

Political Campaigns

The ruling party held a number of well-attended rallies throughout the country. Posters, pamphlets, stickers, t-shirts and other regalia were very prevalent and visible throughout the country.

Few rallies were held by the opposition party, and SEOM observed with concern disruption of campaigning of the opposition party and the regrettable inaction of the law enforcement agencies, despite the court order authorising such rallies.

The one-sided coverage in content and extent of one candidate on the part of the state media, print and electronic. In addition, no advertisements for the opposition party were carried.

A number of pronouncements were made by both Presidential candidates as well as other role players, to the effect that they would not accept and respect the results of the

elections. The SEOM find pronouncements of this nature contrary to the SADC Principle and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.

The SEOM was able to conduct its task without much hindrance. However,, numerous SEOM teams reported being harassed in the course of their duties.

On 22 June 2008 the presidential candidate of the opposition party announced publicly that he was withdrawing from the run-off election and cited the escalation of political violence and intimidation as reasons for his withdrawal.

A formal letter of withdrawal was submitted on 24 June 2008. The ZEC indicated that this letter did not comply with the timre frame set out in the Electoral Act and could not be accepted.

Notwithstanding this withdrawal from the presidential run-off election, the opposition party indicated that its candidates would contest the House of Assembly by-elections in Gwanda South, Pelandaba-Mpopoma and Redcliff Constituencies.

Election Day

The elections was conducted in conditions that were relatively free of violence and was managed by the ZEC in a manner that is technically competent.

At most voting stations observed by SEOM the only party agents present were from the ruling party and that few local observers were accredited for the Presidential runoff compared to the Harmonised Elections held on the 29 March 2008..

The mission noted that, in some spoiled ballot papers, the voters have recorded expressions like "God bless this country," Let there be free and fair elections', No to dictatorship' and so forth, which expressed their dissatisfaction the way the elections were conducted.

There was a low turn out during the runoff compared to the 29 March 2008 harmonised elections.

4. CONCLUSION

The Mission expresses its gratitude to the Member States who have complied to the request of increasing the observers and the provision of the resources.

The pre-election phase was characterised by politically motivated violence, intimidation, and displacements.

The process leading up to the presidential run-off elections held on 27 June 2008 did not conform to SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections. However, the Election Day was peaceful.

Based on the above mentioned observations, the Mission is of the view that the prevailing environment impinged on the credibility of the electoral process. The elections did not represent the will of the people of Zimbabwe.

5. CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We reiterate our conviction that there can be a viable solution to the profound problems facing Zimbabwe through dialogue amongst all political stakeholders, and involving the people of Zimbabwe.

The mission also pledge its support and solidarity to and with the people of Zimbabwe and we wish them courage, strength and determination as they embark on this difficult but vitally necessary process.

The mission strongly recommends that SADC mediation efforts should be continued in order to assist the people and leadership of Zimbabwe to resolve the problems they are facing and bring the country to normalcy. In this regard, SADC should establish a mechanism on the ground in order to seize the momentum for a negotiated solution.

The mission notes that the country needs the concerted efforts of its sons and daughters for economic-socio development and national unity.

The Mission regrets and wishes to express its profound sympathy to those Zimbabwean families who have lost their loved ones and their property.

Harare, 29th June 2008