



Electoral Commission of Namibia

**WELCOMING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF
NAMIBIA, MS. ELSIE NGHIKEMBUA, AT THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING
OF THE 24TH ANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISSIONS
FORUM OF SADC COUNTRIES**

Tuesday, 25th September 2022

Swakopmund, Namibia

**Honorable Erastus Utoni, Minister of Urban & Rural Development,
ECF-SADC President & Chairperson of Independent Electoral Commission of
Botswana – Hon Justice Barnabas Nyamadzabo,
ECF-SADC Executive Committee Chairperson & Chairperson of Zimbabwe
Electoral Commission - Hon Justice Priscilla Chigumba,
Governor of Erongo Region, Honorable Neville Andre,
Senior Government Officials of the Republic of Namibia,
Chairpersons and Commissioners from various Election Management Bodies
(EMB's) of the SADC Countries,
CEO's of Election Management Bodies and Executive Directors of State
Institutions,
International Partner Organizations and Invited Guests,
Distinguished Resource Persons and Facilitators,
Leaders of Political Parties and Organizations present,
Representatives of Civil Society Organizations,
Esteemed Members of the Media,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. It is my honor and pleasure to welcome you all to the Land of the Brave for the 24th Annual General Conference of the Electoral Commissions Forum of SADC Countries. The Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) is delighted to host you in Swakopmund, our beautiful coastal town, where the desert meets the ocean.
2. With that said, we are looking forward to taking you on a sightseeing tour on Thursday in order for you to enjoy the scenery of our breathtaking coastline and we hope that all our guests who travelled from all over SADC will be available to share in this memorable experience.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. I wish to start my welcoming remarks by reminding the ECF-SADC family that the two previous AGC's were held virtually due to the impact of COVID-19. The 22nd AGC was held in line with the theme **Electoral Justice in the SADC region**. The 22nd AGC also highlighted the challenges occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic which has greatly impacted and modified how the Forum conduct its business.
4. Similarly, the 23rd Annual General Conference was held virtually under the theme: **The Conduct of Elections in the Context of COVID-19 & Hostile Social Media Environment**. These themes were carefully chosen to tackle important and topical electoral issues that has the potential to impact on the functioning of the ECF-SADC Member Commissions on the one hand and general electoral governance in the region on the other hand.
5. As can be inferred from this well-established practice, the seminar that will commence immediately following this official opening session is organised as part of the Annual General Conference programme to deal with electoral governance issues under a theme selected by the ECF-SADC Executive Committee (EXCO). In this regard, the theme of this year's seminar is appropriately named: "**Stakeholder Engagement and Accountability to promote public trust in Electoral Processes in the SADC region**".

6. Namibian electoral stakeholders present here this morning would agree with me that the theme selected for this year's Seminar holds particular significance to the Namibian context. It is thus my wish that we will all have an opportunity to learn from different regional perspectives as we discuss the complex issue of political party financing and compliance, and its relevance to accountability as an important aspect of electoral integrity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. It is my assertion that electoral accountability depends on transparency which is also essential to preserve the credibility of the electoral process, more so when it comes to the handling and disclosure of funds for electoral processes. As stakeholders in this very important process, we all have an obligation to ensure that the law is upheld and that relevant provisions are fully enforced and complied with. In general terms, laws that regulate political party financing are intended to amongst others deter corruption, misuse of state resources and encourage transparency of political party funds through regular and timely submissions of audited financial reports and statements. In this particular connection, I confirm that there will be a presentation by the Electoral Commission of Namibia at this Seminar to appraise us on this important topic.
8. Furthermore, electoral accountability is an important feature of democratic societies as the process ensures that those who conduct elections do so, in compliance with the election legislation and relevant procedures and in a manner that promotes the integrity of the process. We are thus looking to gatherings such as this one to transform good intentions into tangible programs and projects that can reinforce the development of a democratic culture that is characterized by professionally conducted elections whose outcomes are credible.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. Allow me to take this opportunity to thank the Government of the Republic of Namibia for supporting the hosting of this important conference. In particular, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the Minister of Urban and Rural Development,

Honorable Erastus Utoni for gracing this event and for agreeing to officially open our 24th Annual General Conference.

10. To my fellow Namibian guests present here today, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for accepting to participate in this important seminar and for the role you play in the conduct of electoral processes and thereby strengthening democracy in our country.

11. To all the facilitators who will guide us during our deliberations today, thank you for taking the time and providing us with your expertise. I am certain all of us will be enriched by your knowledge and wisdom.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

12. I would like to extend my gratitude to all stakeholders present here today, your institutions play a pivotal role in the democracy of our countries and your presence demonstrate your commitment to strengthening democracy, and good governance in the SADC region.

13. In conclusion, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish all participants fruitful discussions and deliberations and wish you all a memorable and joyous stay in Namibia.

ONCE AGAIN, YOU ARE ALL MOST WELCOME, AND I THANK YOU.