



Electoral Commission of Namibia



NAMIBIA 2009 ELECTORAL SYMPOSIUM



17 - 18 March 2009

Striving for free, fair and credible elections in 2009

COMMUNIQUE

PREAMBLE

Having taken cognisance of the fact that the Namibian nation will go to the polls towards the end of 2009, to elect a President and Members of the National Assembly. In a concerted effort to build the momentum, stakeholder consensus and enhance stakeholder participation in the process, the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN), being the legally mandated electoral management agency (Act 24, 1992), convened the Namibia 2009 Electoral Symposium under the theme: “Striving for Free, Fair and Credible Elections in 2009”. The Symposium was held on 17th and 18th March 2009 at the Nampower Convention Centre in Windhoek.

Present at the Symposium were representatives of the following political parties; All People’s Party, Congress of Democrats, Democratic Party of Namibia, DTA of Namibia, National Democratic Party, Namibia DMC, NUDO Party, Rally for Democracy and Progress, Republican Party of Namibia, SWANU of Namibia, SWAPO Party, United Democratic Front of Namibia and representatives of civil society including the media. In attendance were members of the Diplomatic corps, representatives of Office of the Prime Minister, Office of the Inspector General of the Police, Office of the Ombudsman and tertiary institutions. The technical input of representatives of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, International Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA), Institute of Security Studies (ISS) and that of local resource persons.

The Symposium was officially opened by the Speaker of the National Assembly of Namibia, Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, who amongst other issues, highlighted the importance of elections to democracy. The Speaker reiterated the Presidential call on political tolerance and encouraged the promotion of gender equality to attain the desired 50-50% gender parity target. He further called on voters to participate in the upcoming 2009 elections. The Office of the Chairman of the National Council, represented by Hon. Magreth Mensah-Williams who presented closing remarks, emphasized the role of parliamentarians as products of elections and calling upon participants to put into practice the commitments they made.

1. Pursuant to its stated objectives, the Symposium considered expert inputs on important issues such as: Elections, Democracy and Pluralism, SADC Electoral Instruments, Gender and Elections, Political Tolerance, Code of Conduct for Political Parties and the, Roles and Responsibilities of Civil Society in ensuring free, fair and credible elections;
2. Noting that elections are not synonymous with democracy but nevertheless intricately linked to sustainable development, we therefore, express our full support for the forthcoming elections as a means to achieving the objectives of Vision 2030 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);
3. Aware of the various SADC electoral instruments such as the SADC Principles and Guidelines for Democratic Elections, the Norms and Standards for Elections in the SADC Region, the Principles for Election Management, Monitoring and Observation in the SADC Region, the Electoral Commissions Forum Principles, and Guidelines on the Independence of Electoral Management Bodies, we strongly express our support for the domestication in Namibia's electoral framework and practices of the principles and standards for free, fair and credible elections enshrined in these and other relevant instruments;
4. Cognisant of the provisions of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, which commits SADC member states to equal participation and representation of women in politics and decision making, as read with other related regional and national legal instruments aimed at women's empowerment, we encourage our Government, political parties and other actors to accelerate women participation in politics and decision making in pursuit of gender equality;
5. Acknowledging the potential devastating role of political intolerance and resultant violence and conflicts, we strongly urge fellow Namibians to desist from any and all

forms of political violence and equally commit ourselves to promoting intra and inter political party tolerance and cooperation as a pre-requisite to ensuring the success of Namibia's 2009 Presidential and National Assembly Elections. This will also contribute to the continued enjoyment of Namibia's peace and tranquillity;

- 6.** Committing ourselves and reiterating the importance of the Code of Conduct for Political Parties and candidates, urge all political parties and other stakeholders to strictly adhere to the Code as well as other relevant legislation;
- 7.** Encouraged by the Speaker's commitment to ensure that the Electoral Amendment Bill (2008) is brought before Parliament in due course, we recommend that the Code of Conduct for Political Parties be made legally enforceable;
- 8.** Welcoming the official launch of ECN's 2009 Calendar, we propose greater stakeholder participation and support in its implementation;
- 9.** Finally, we individually and collectively, commit ourselves to all the commitments here made and the Code of Conduct for Political Parties as a means to achieving free, fair and credible 2009 elections in Namibia;
- 10.** Done this Wednesday 18th March 2009 at Windhoek.