



## **Botswana Elections Key Highlights and Recommendations**

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### **1. Introduction**

The Botswana 30 October 2024 General Elections were the 13<sup>th</sup> consecutive democratic elections since 1965. The Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) had ruled Botswana since the country gained independence from Britain in 1966, dominating the country's politics for nearly six decades. The country has been held up as one of Africa's most stable democracies and is regarded as a post-colonial success story, having built one of the highest standards of living in the region through an economy that largely relies on diamonds.

General elections in Botswana are held every five years after the expiry of one life of Parliament. Ordinarily, Parliament dissolves in the 5<sup>th</sup> year, giving way to the holding of general elections. National Assembly and Local Government elections are held in one day and conducted in accordance with the established electoral legal framework of Botswana and internationally recognised principles and standards. The general elections decide the makeup of its Parliament, and lawmakers then choose the President. In 2024, candidates contested for 61 seats in the National Assembly from single-member constituencies and a party with a majority of seats (31) was to form the government as provided for in the legal framework.

The Botswana elections are governed by a progressive legal framework; the 1966 Constitution, the 1969 Presidential Elections (Supplementary Provisions) Act, the 1968 Electoral Act and the 2012 Local Government Act. The electoral system in Botswana is based on the first-past-the-post or a simple majority system. Sections 32-35 of the Constitution provide that a president is elected for five years and is eligible for re-election once

With a total population of approximately 2.5 million people, 1,038,261 (80%) out of a projected 1,700 00 million were registered to vote in 2024. Of these, 1,036,229 were registered locally and 2,032 in the diaspora. Following the 2022 delimitation process, constituencies increased from 57 to 61, polling districts from 490 to 609, and polling stations from 2,258 to 2,808 locally and 37 to 51 in the diaspora. Polling took place against the backdrop of a political and security environment that was very calm and peaceful. This

lack of violent incidents during the campaigns showed a degree of political tolerance and maturity by the people of Botswana. Free political campaigns by political parties and independent candidates through various ways, such as door-to-door presidential debates and other media campaigns, were conducted in the run-up to the election. However, despite the above, there are still gaps in the legal framework that should be addressed to further improve the conduct of elections in Botswana.

## **2. Key highlights and recommendations from the EOMs.**

### **2.1 Amendment and Enactment of Electoral Laws**

Several amendments were introduced late, contrary to the ACDEG and good practice. Late enactment of electoral laws causes suspicion. **(SEOM)**

The Government of Botswana should consider announcing the election day well in advance, at least two (2) months before, to give the IEC, political parties, candidates and other stakeholders enough time to prepare for the General Elections. Further, the Government of Botswana to amend the Electoral Act to allow more categories of people to participate in the advance voting, including people with disabilities, the elderly and expectant mothers. **(SEOM)**

The constitutional review process should ensure citizen views on electoral reforms are addressed. **(AUEOM)**

Botswana to ratify the 2007 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, the 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, Relating to the Rights of Women (Maputo Protocol) and the 2006 African Youth Charter. Adopt the Political Parties Act to regulate the conduct of political parties before, during and after elections. Having the Act could also address political party funding and financing. **(AUEOM)**

Need to promulgate the laws to govern the registration, funding and regulation of political parties in Botswana. **(ECF-SADC)**

The completion of the constitutional review process and relevant legislative reforms and provision of state funding for political parties. **(ACG)**

### **2.2 Voter Registration and Education**

Amend the Electoral Act to introduce continuous voters' registration and permanent electoral roll; and amend the Electoral Act to obligate the IEC to make both hard and electronic copies of the electoral roll available for inspection and verification by stakeholders. **(SEOM)**

The Government of Botswana to amend the country's Electoral Law to obligate the IEC to provide voter education during and after electoral periods, taking into consideration persons with disabilities. **(SEOM)**

Introduce technology for some aspects of voter registration and verification process to reduce double registration. **(AUEOM)**

There is need for IEC Botswana to strengthen the voter education programmes. Use of innovative technology by IEC during the voter registration and verification exercise must be encouraged. **(ECF-SADC)**

### **2.3 Transparency of Electoral Processes**

The government of Botswana should amend the Electoral Act to include display of voters roll outside polling stations; use of transparent ballot boxes during voting; counting of votes at polling stations; and publication of provisional results at Polling Stations. **(SEOM)**

Avail electronic copies of the voters' roll to political parties in a timely manner for auditing and to improve credibility in the electoral process. **(AUEOM)**

IEC Botswana to engage political parties and stakeholders to establish consensus on measures to enhance transparency in the management of elections in particular the printing, storage and transportation of ballot papers. **(ECF-SADC)**

Increase public trust in the process and the Commission, consider improving the administration of advance voting and the location of the IEC. **(ZESN-ESN-SA)**

CSOs must be empowered to engage in the electoral process meaningfully, especially as domestic observers. This can strengthen democratic processes, promote transparency, and ensure inclusive representation. **(ZESN-ESN-SA)**

Consider the use of translucent boxes, as this practice enhances transparency in the voting process. **(ZESN-ESN-SA)**

### **2.4 Election administration**

The Government is urged to ensure that the IEC is independent, impartial, professional, inclusive, accountable and staffed by eminent, non-partisan and capable commissioners and efficient and professional personnel per Section 5.1.3 of the Revised SADC Principles and Guideline **(SEOM)**

The IEC to plan and implement deliberate measures to ensure the availability of voting materials during advance voting both locally and in the diaspora **(SEOM)**

IEC Botswana to prioritise timely release and sharing of the election activities road map (election calendar) and related materials and information (e.g. Voters Roll). On appointment of Commissioners for IEC Botswana, there is need to ensure continuity by including staggered appointment of commissioners and their appointment and dismissal procedures should be

clearly articulated with processes that are impartial, accountable and transparent. **(ECF-SADC)**

IEC to improve on its communication strategy for purposes of confidence building and adequately informing all stakeholders. Its press conferences could be supported with statistical information, especially on key issues such as voters roll and late opening and closing of polling stations. **(ECF-SADC)**

The government should continue to adequately fund the election body timeously. The question of the independence of the IEC needs to be addressed in light of the appointment processes of the IEC Secretary and its location within the Office of the President. **(ACG)**

IEC should ensure that advance voting is conducted in a way that builds and promotes public trust in the Commission. **(ZESN-ESN-SA)**

## ***2.5 Promotion of Media Freedom***

The Government of Botswana to provide all political parties and candidates equal access to public media and regulate private and public media throughout the electoral cycle. **(SEOM)**

strengthen the legal framework governing media coverage of elections in order to enhance fair, balanced and responsible reporting by the media especially the public media. The IEC to develop a dedicated communications strategy for dealing with disinformation, use and abuse of social media in line with the Principles and Guidelines for the use of the Digital and social media in Elections in Africa. **(ECF-SADC)**

IEC is encouraged to put strong measures in place to combat misinformation and disinformation in the electoral cycle. **(ACG)**

## ***2.6 Results Management***

The government of Botswana to amend the Electoral Act to include counting of voted at the polling station and publication of provisional results at Polling Stations **(SEOM)**

Counting should be done at the polling station level, and results should be posted to the polling stations as a best practice. This will increase the transparency of the process and electoral integrity. **(ZESN-ESN-SA)**

Enact laws that provide for ballot counting at polling stations to uphold the principles of transparency and security of the ballots. **(AUEOM)**

## **2.7 Inclusion**

Political parties in Botswana to encourage women's participation in politics and decision-making positions. The Mission urges the Government of Botswana to consider ratifying the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. Further, they should adopt policies to enhance youth representation in political party structures and participation in elections. Political parties should also promote policies of inclusion of persons with disabilities in politics. **(SEOM)**

Adopt affirmative action measures aimed at increasing participation of women, youth and PWDs in elective positions. Political parties should adopt affirmative action measures including a review of nomination requirements and introduction of quotas to enhance women's representation in elective positions **(AUEOM)**

develop strong legal and administrative mechanisms to encourage and support the adoption of women as candidates so as to ensure gender parity in political and decision-making positions in line with the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. **(ECF-SADC)**

## **3. Conclusion**

Overall, Missions concurred and concluded that the pre-election and voting phases of the 2024 General Elections in the Republic of Botswana were conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner where the Botswana people exercised their democratic right to vote. The elections largely complied with the national laws and regional, continental and international standards. Other than the logistical challenges experienced by IEC during the pre-election period, specifically around advance voting, the election day and the immediate post-election period, all processes were procedural. With regards to the gaps they noted, the Missions provided recommendations across various domains, highlighting a clear pathway towards improving the electoral process in Botswana.