ESN-SA
ELECTORAL SUPPORT NETWORK OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

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Mozambique Elections Key Highlights and Recommendations

1. Introduction

Independent election observation plays a vital role in safeguarding democracy. It enhances transparency, builds trust, and promotes accountability, all of which are essential for maintaining the integrity of electoral process and the health of democratic institutions. The insights gained from election observers inform future electoral processes, thereby strengthening democratic norms of a country.

On 9 October 2024, citizens of Mozambique went to the polls to elect the President and Members of Parliament and Provincial Governors. These elections marked the seventh round of Presidential and Legislative elections since the onset of multi-party elections in 1994. The elections took place in 25,725 polling stations in Mozambique's ten provinces and in 602 diaspora polling stations in seven African and two European countries. A total of 17,169,239 citizens were registered, including 333,839 in the diaspora, reflecting a 30% increase compared to the 2019 elections. The Mozambique elections were commendable for several reasons. Notwithstanding the insecurity in some areas of Cabo Delgado Province which faced acts of terrorism, the country was calm and peaceful in the pre-election and election period. However, the aftermath of the election was characterised by electoral violence, which resulted in the recorded deaths of Elvino Divas, legal advisor to Mozambican presidential candidate Venâncio Mondlane and Paulo Gambe, the legal representative of the political party PODEMOS. The killings have been widely condemned by the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), Embassies in Mozambique, Electoral Support Network of Southern Africa (ESN-SA) among others.

Following the elections, the ESN-SA compiled key highlights based on the initial findings of various Election Observer Missions (EOMs) that observed the elections. These preliminary statements provide initial insights and recommendations, distinct from the final reports that are typically published after the official election results are announced. ESN-SA drew on preliminary findings from several organisations, including the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG), the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries Electoral Observation Mission (CPLP MOE), the Electoral Commissions Forum of SADC Countries (ECF-SADC), the EU Election Observation Mission (EU EOM), the African Centre for Governance (ACG), the SADC Electoral

Observation Mission (SEOM), and the International Republican Institute's (IRI) International Election Observation Mission (IEOM).

2. Key highlights and recommendations from the EOMs

2.1 Amendment and enactment of laws

— Electoral laws should be amended in good time to allow stakeholders to familiarise themselves with the amended laws. There should be consideration for harmonisation of electoral laws where pieces of legislation are put together. **(ECF-SADC)**
— Future amendments to the electoral framework should be introduced well in advance of election day to allow adequate time for implementation and voter education. **(ACG)**
— Both the Executive and Parliament are urged to ensure that electoral law reforms are enacted early in the electoral cycle in order to avoid the introduction of electoral reforms close to the election periods **(SEOM)**
— EU EOM noted that late amendments to the electoral law introduced some positive features, but changes impacted legal certainty **(EU EOM)**
— Publish electoral law amendments well in advance of election day to prevent confusion. Late Electoral Law Changes/Amendments, published less than seven weeks before election day, caused confusion over dispute resolution. **(IEOM)**
— Consideration should be made for timely passing of electoral amendments to allow sufficient time for implementation and the sensitisation of the relevant stakeholders. **(AU EOM)**

2.2 Voter Registration and Education

— There is a need for an external auditing process of the biometric voter registration process. It is also noted that biometric registration is being undertaken without data protection law and it is recommended that such a law be enacted. Creation of a dedicated funding stream for voter education should be considered. **(COG)**
— Several amendments to the legal framework were introduced within two months of the election, contrary to international good practice, including the ACDEG. The late enactment of electoral laws causes suspicion and left little time for voter education **(COG)**
— A comprehensive voter education strategy should be developed, with a focus on reaching rural populations, persons with disabilities, and IDPs. Greater collaboration with civil society and international partners is recommended to strengthen these efforts. **(ACG)**
— Voter Registration Concerns especially inflated voter rolls which exceeded population estimates, particularly in FRELIMO strongholds. Consider a permanent voter register to maintain updated voter information during election years and allow voters to confirm their registration ahead of election day to ensure their names are correctly listed. **(IEOM)**
— Consider implementing a continuous model of voter registration that is linked to the civil register. Evolve the voter registration model to minimise recurring costs. **(AU EOM)**
— The EU EOM noted that there was a notable lack of confidence in the reliability of the electoral register, given the discrepancies between the population projections of the INE

and the electoral register: in several provinces the voter register reflected a higher number of voters than the overall voting age population derived from the national census. **(EU EOM)**

2.3   Election administration

— Mozambique is urged to revisit the composition of the Electoral Management Body (EMB) in order to professionalise these critical electoral institutions on the basis of non-partisanship, whilst retaining the inclusion of Civil Society Organisations **(SEOM)**
— The budget for the election body CNE should be timeously approved and disbursed in line with the electoral cycle. It is advisable that the government adequately funds the election management body in order for it to deliver credible and legitimate elections. **(ECF-SADC)**
— Strengthening Independent Institutions and Combatting Misuse of State Resources, including strengthening CNE budgetary independence by ensuring direct and timely access to approved election funds and avoiding government control over election finances. Enforce prohibitions on state resource misuse to ensure governing authorities do not exploit public assets or mobilise civil servants for political campaigns. **(IEOM)**
— Composition of the electoral body and the administration of previous elections have been raised as concerns by multiple stakeholders, with the body perceived to be political in its decision-making **(COG)**
— Continue to explore mechanisms for strengthening transparency and accountability across all spheres of election administration such as procurement recruitment of personnel and management of election results. **(AU EOM)**
— Efforts should be made to address logistical challenges, particularly in rural and remote areas. The CNE and STAE should invest in better infrastructure for the timely delivery of materials and the transmission of results. **(ACG)**
— Improve the training of Polling Station Members considering changes to the Electoral Law **(CPLP MOE)**
— Ensure timely accreditation for party agents and citizen observers to guarantee access to polling centres and prevent intimidation, in line with international human rights standards. **(AU EOM)**

2.4   Promotion of Media Freedom

— COG noted an imbalance in coverage by public media, especially TV coverage that was more favourable to the governing party and its candidates. This uneven playing field affects the efforts of opposition parties to reach a wider audience, as well as voters' ability to make an informed decision. **(COG)**
— To ensure a level playing field, state-owned media should be required to provide equitable coverage to all political parties. Regulatory bodies should also address the spread of disinformation during the campaign and election periods. **(ACG)**
— Noted that Freedom of expression was respected but there was biased news coverage in the public radio and television in favour of the ruling party **(EU EOM)**

2.5   Results Management

— Ensure the verification of correspondence between the number of votes cast in the ballot box and the number of ballots registered on the voter lists; speed up the tabulation of results at each assembly; accelerate the calculation of results at national level; ensure the proper and timely publication of results, possibly using digital media, at all levels, from the assembly to the national level. **(CPLP MOE)**
— Transparency in Results as there is limited transparency in result collation and publication risks undermining credibility. **(IEOM)**

2.6   Election Dispute

— Defer to legal process to address any disputes that may arise. In case of disputes arising, the mission implores stakeholders to follow the laid-out mechanisms and procedures. **(AU EOM)**
— The Mission noted that late electoral law changes, published less than seven weeks before election day, caused confusion over dispute resolution. **(IEOM)**
— In the event of any electoral disputes, the Mission appeals to all contestants to channel their concerns through established legal procedures and processes. **(SEOM)**
— If any disputes do arise, we would also encourage candidates in these elections to allow the rule of law to prevail. **(COG)**

2.7   Inclusion

— CNE to improve the accessibility of polling stations for persons with disabilities and the elderly. Political parties urged to support female candidates to stand for leadership positions and adhere to gender quotas. **(AUEOM)**
— Promoting inclusive elections practices that encourage the participation of vulnerable groups. Increase the role of women and underrepresented groups in leadership and campaigning by encouraging political parties to develop internal democratic processes. **(IEOM)**
— Political parties that have not done so are urged to adopt the "Zebra list" system for party lists in order to ensure 50-50 gender parity for purposes of elections at all levels. The EMBs are urged to engage both central and local government authorities to ensure that all polling stations and voting stations are accessible to people living with disabilities. The EMBs are urged to engage both central and local government authorities to ensure that all polling stations and voting stations are accessible to people living with disabilities. **(SEOM)**

3. Conclusion

Overall, Missions such as the SEOM, ACG, COG, ECF-SADC and AU EOM concurred the Mozambique pre-election period was peaceful. They concluded that the elections were competitive, calm, orderly and professionally organised in most polling stations. They accorded the people of Mozambique a chance to exercise their rights in accordance with the electoral law, and they voted peacefully and freely. The SEOM was particularly heartened by the patience

and resilience of the people of Cabo Delgado Province, who turned out to vote despite the terrorist threat in some of the affected districts in the province.

With regards to the gaps they noted, the Missions provided recommendations across various domains, highlighting a clear pathway towards improving the electoral process in Mozambique. They emphasised the importance of timely legislative amendments, robust voter education, credible electoral administration, media fairness, transparency in results management, and inclusivity. Implementing these recommendations can significantly enhance the integrity and effectiveness of electoral processes, ultimately fostering greater public trust and participation.

About ESN-SA

The Electoral Support Network of Southern Africa (ESN-SA) is a regional network of 15 non-governmental organisations working in the area of elections in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. It was established in January 1998. More information is available at https://www.esn-sa.org/