



ELECTION OBSERVATION & LEARNING MISSION TO THE BOTSWANA

OCTOBER 30, 2024 GENERAL ELECTIONS

Final Report



Zimbabwe Election
Support Network ■
Promoting Democratic
Elections In Zimbabwe



TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- ACDEG** African Charter on Democracy Elections and Governance
- ACGEOM** African Centre for Governance Election Observation Mission
- AUEOM** African Union Election Observation Mission
- CSOs** Civil Society Organisations
- BCP** Botswana Congress Party
- BDP** Botswana Democratic Party
- BOCONGO** Botswana Centre for Human Rights Council of Non-Governmental Organisations
- BOCRA** Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority
- BPF** Botswana Patriotic Front
- BTV** Botswana Television
- EBA** Emang Basadi Association
- ECF-SADC** Electoral Commissions of SADC Countries
- EOM** Election Observation Mission
- ESN-SA** Electoral Support Network of Southern Africa
- IEC** Independent Electoral Commission
- NICE** National Initiative for Civic Education
- SADC** Southern African Development Community
- SEOM** SADC Election Observation Mission
- UDC** Umbrella for Democratic Change
- ZESN** Zimbabwe Election Support Network

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network, in conjunction with the Electoral Support Network for Southern Africa Election Observer Mission (ZESN-ESN-SA EOM) to the nation of Botswana expresses sincere gratitude to all stakeholders that contributed to the success of its Mission's observation efforts.

We are especially thankful to the Government of Botswana for inviting us to observe the 2024 General Elections. Additionally, we appreciate the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) for facilitating an efficient and smooth accreditation process.

We are additionally grateful for the contributions of everyone the Mission interacted with, you all played a crucial role in supporting our Mission. Your efforts are vital to our commitment to promoting democratic processes and desire to ensure free and fair elections particularly in the region.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Botswana General elections took place on 30 October 2024 to elect members of the 13th Parliament of Botswana and local councils across the country. Voters cast their ballots for 61 National Assembly seats and 609 local council positions, utilising the first-past-the-post system. This election marked the end of the 58 years of uninterrupted rule since independence in 1966 by the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP). The BDP lost the election to the Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC). The UDC won 36 seats, a majority of five, consequently making Duma Boko the leader of the party President-elect.

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), jointly working with the Electoral Support Network of Southern Africa (ESN-SA), was in Botswana from the 27th of October to the 2nd of November to observe the immediate pre-election, E-Day and immediate post-election periods. Based on its findings the Botswana 2024 General Elections were conducted in a calm and peaceful atmosphere and largely adhered to national, regional and international frameworks. Notwithstanding some noted anomalies, the election outcome largely reflected the will of the people of Botswana, making it a beacon of democracy in the region. Several lessons were learnt from the election, including;

- Involving women and youth as election officials enhances their participation in electoral processes. This engagement empowers these groups and fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility towards democratic practices.
- Role of unarmed security officers who were not interfering and non-intimidating in executing their duties.

Based on its findings, and in the spirit and commitment for improvement of the framework and conduct of future elections in Botswana the Mission, however, offers the following recommendations to improve the conduct of future elections in Botswana:

- The IEC should ensure that advance voting is conducted in a way that builds and promotes public trust in the Commission.
- 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.
- Counting should be done at the polling station level, and results should be posted at polling stations as a best practice. This will increase the transparency of the process and electoral integrity.
- Consider the use of translucent boxes, as this practice enhances transparency in the voting process.

2. INTRODUCTION

In response to an invitation from the Government of the Republic of Botswana, the ZESN and ESN-SA deployed an Election Observation and Learning Mission (EOM) to observe the Botswana General Elections held on 30 October 2024. The team observed voting in urban, peri-urban and rural areas around Gaborone. Prior to the Election Day observation, the team met with various electoral stakeholders.

The Mission's main aim was two-fold. Firstly, the Mission sought to assess whether the electoral process in Botswana complied with normative frameworks and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections as well as the national legal framework of Botswana. Secondly, the Mission assessed whether the environment leading up to, during and immediately after the elections was peaceful, conducive and free from violence—to warrant the legitimacy of the electoral outcome. To achieve these objectives, several activities were undertaken, including meeting with the umbrella organisation for Botswana Civil Society and interacting with members of other International Election Observer Missions present for the same election in Botswana. The Mission subsequently deployed two teams to observe voting in selected areas of Gaborone North, Central, South and Kgatleng Central, East and West.

This Report outlines the ZESN-ESN Mission's overall findings, conclusions and recommendations based on the direct and indirect observation and assessment of the Botswana General Elections the Mission conducted. It includes observation findings political and electoral environment preceding the election, processes and events such as election day proceedings and procedures and results.

a) Election Observation Methodology

The ZESN-ESN-SA Observation was premised on the understanding that election observation is a crucial democratic practice that provides impartial and credible assessments of elections, along with recommendations for improving future electoral conduct. It is rooted in independently examining electoral processes to gauge their effectiveness, promoting human rights and good governance. The Botswana General Elections were assessed, benchmarking compliance with the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections and Botswana's legal framework, which includes the Constitution, the Electoral Act, the Code of Conduct for Political Parties and the Code of Conduct for Broadcasting During Elections.

The Mission also had an opportunity to interact with other International Election Observation Missions present on the ground, such as the Southern Africa Development Community Election Observer Mission (SEOM), African Union Election Observer Mission (AUEOM), SADC-ECF, African Centre for Governance Election Observation Mission (ACG-EOM), the Electoral Commissions of SADC Countries (ECF-SADC), National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE), among others. Subsequently, the Mission deployed two (2) teams to observe the polling day processes, such as opening, voting and counting in selected areas of Gaborone North, Central, South and Kgatleng Central, East and West.

In observing the General Elections, the ZESN-ESN-SA Mission was guided by the basic values and principles of neutrality, impartiality, non-partisanship, competence, objectivity and honesty. The Mission did not interfere with electoral processes, it respected the laws, regulation and procedures of Botswana and conducted its duties appropriately, humanely and with utmost respect to the election officers and voters.

Background

Botswana's political landscape was dominated by the BDP since independence. On the 30th of October, the incumbent Masisi sought re-election as the BDP president. Several factors pulled down his popularity. One of his predecessor Ian Seretse Khama whom he fell out with in 2018 canvassed vigorously for the opposition BFP. Khama had already served his two terms, making it constitutionally impossible to contest. He however made it clear that his goal was to unseat Masisi.

Another headache for Masisi was the economic downturn as evidenced by unemployment levels that rose from about 36% in 2019 to about 49% in 2024. Khama's return and economic downturn prompted discontent in the electorate resulting in the fall of Masisi and ascendancy of the UDC's candidate, Boko.

As the Botswana General Elections drew nearer, the then President Masisi declared key electoral dates and events, pegging the 30th of October as election date. Below are some key electoral event dates guiding the Botswana 2024 General Elections. While the General Elections were successfully conducted, announcement of election dates was done a bit late considering that subsequent processes like nomination of candidates, printing of ballot papers were supposed to all come after announcement of election date. Notwithstanding this, the Botswana 30 October General Elections were ahead successfully

Table 1: Key Electoral Event Dates

Date	Event
3 September 2024	President Mokgweetsi Masisi announces that the general election will be held on 30 October.
5 September 2024	President issues formal direction to the IEC to hold the election. Official start of the campaign period.
8 September 2024	Nominations for indirect presidential election candidates are held and close at 5:00 pm.
4 October 2024	Nominations for parliamentary and council candidates are held.
19 October 2024	Advance voting (only for election and police officers who will be on duty on polling day) and overseas voting.
30 October 2024	Election day – Polling places across the country open 6:30 am to 7:00pm. Preliminary election results are released progressively after 7:00 pm.

a) Election Administration

An independent, impartial, professional, and effective Election Management Body (EMB) is important for the conduct of credible elections and the facilitation of participation of citizens in the democratic process. Botswana establishes the IEC as an independent body appointed under Section 65A of the Constitution and mandated to conduct and supervise. The Commission comprises seven members who hold office for two successive terms on an ad-hoc basis.

New commissioners to the IEC were appointed on 16 September 2024, a few weeks to the 30 October General Elections. This move was criticised for not affording the new commissioners enough time to settle in office before the holding of a major national election. In addition, concerns were raised regarding the independence of the IEC, particularly its close ties with the Ministry of State President. Concerns were also raised on the complete autonomy of the Commission given the powers vested in the President under Section 66 of the Constitution to appoint the Secretary to the IEC.

Despite these concerns, the IEC successfully delivered a credible election following several preparatory activities, including but not limited to delimitation of electoral boundaries, nomination of candidates, establishment of polling districts and polling stations and accreditation of domestic and international observers. Most of the activities were conducted efficiently, notwithstanding the late dissolution of Parliament on the 5th of September 2024 and the late announcement of election dates, which had the potential to impact the smooth implementation of electoral events and processes. The IEC conducted the nomination of candidates' process on the 4th of October, leaving limited time to print ballot papers since the IEC could only commence printing after the nomination of candidates.

b) Electoral System

In Botswana, a General Election is held every five years, with the previous election having been held on 23 October 2019. The Parliament consists of 61 members elected in single-member constituencies through first-past-the-post electoral system, alongside six members appointed by the governing party and two ex-officio members (the President and the Speaker). Eligibility to vote comes when one attains 18 years old and has been a resident in the country for at least 12 months prior to voter registration. Those declared insane, or hold dual citizenship, or are under a death sentence, or convicted of an electoral offence or imprisoned for at least six months are prohibited from voting. The president is indirectly elected for a five-year term by the Parliament. Since 1997, presidents have been limited to a maximum of ten years in office, whether consecutive or not in accordance with the legal provisions.

a) Legal Framework

Botswana's legal framework for the October 30, 2024, elections include the;

1. Constitution of Botswana 1966, (as amended)
2. the 1968 Electoral Act, (as amended)
3. the 2012 Local Government Act,
4. the Code of Conduct for Political Parties and
5. the Code of Conduct for Private Broadcast Media.

Further, the 2024 General Elections were largely guided by continental and international standards such as the SADC Guidelines and Principles Governing Democratic Elections, Principles for Election Management, Monitoring and Observation in the SADC Region (PEMMO) and African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG).

The Mission commends the progressive and positive electoral law amendments done by Botswana, introducing changes to increase transparency in the election and guard against multiple voting on Election Day using indelible voters' ink. This followed an amendment to the Electoral Act to re-introduce the use of indelible ink during voting, Section 54 of the Electoral Act was recently amended to allow for voters to be marked after satisfying the requirements of the Act. "A voter...shall be marked on his hand by drawing a short line on the voter's left thumb or left thumb nail with visible indelible ink" and this was done accordingly. The indelible ink is expected to guard against multiple voting during elections.

In March 2024, a sweeping Constitutional (Amendment) Bill was introduced. The Bill was dropped on 4 September 2024, over concerns on its content and the process. Among other things, it sought to increase specially elected MPs which was going to result in consolidation of power and influence over the legislative process by the executive.

However, some concerns were raised regarding the electoral-legal framework and called for a need to adhere to SADC guidelines and regional best practices on the counting process. The law in Botswana provides that after the close of polls, ballot papers are transported to the constituency centres for counting. Best practice would be counting of votes at the polling stations immediately after closing of polls. The Mission noted that this practice could constitute a source of tension in the event of a disputed election outcome. Fears were also raised regarding using metal ballot boxes instead of translucent ballot boxes to enhance transparency.

Additionally, there are worries about the IEC's proximity to the executive branch affected public trust in the IEC. By law, the IEC of Botswana falls under the presidency and thus reports to the Office of the President.

b) Delimitation

In accordance with section 64(1) of the Constitution of Botswana, a Delimitation Commission was appointed on 13 May 2022 following the release of the decennial 2022 Botswana Census. After the Delimitation of electoral boundaries, the following constituencies were created: Mogoditshane West, Maun North, Okavango West, Okavango East and Kgatleng Central, while the Mmathethe-Molapowabojang constituency was eliminated. Consultations with the public and various interest groups ran from 20 June to 28 November 2022. The Commission presented its finalised report to the President on 10 February 2023.

c) Voter Registration

Botswana has a population of approximately over 2.5 million, with 1.7 million being eligible to vote. In preparation for the 2024 General Elections, the IEC set a target of registering 1.3 million eligible voters. General voter registration commenced on 5 January 2024 and ended on 3 February. However, the total number of registrants during this period was lower than expected, prompting the IEC to conduct two supplementary voter registration sessions. The first, from 26 February to 15 March, added 74,404 registered electors. The second and final supplementary registration took place from 20 to 31 May, yielding an additional 197,021 registered electors. At the end of the voter registration exercises, the IEC had registered 1,038,261 million voters, which is 80% of the total population. Further, 2032 registrants in the Diaspora were registered for the advance voting.

The increased voter registrants directly translated to an increase in polling districts from 490 to 609, polling stations from 2,258 to 2,808 locally, and from 37 to 54 in the diaspora, ensuring accessibility to voting by eligible voters. The electoral process was marked by high turnout, reflecting citizens' enthusiasm to participate in governance issues compared to the 2019 General Elections, where 925 478 (73%) of the total population registered to vote locally and 1 044 in the diaspora.

d) Advance Voting

The Botswana Electoral Law provides for advance voting. To fulfil this legal obligation, the Botswana IEC conducted advance voting on 19 October 2024. Concerns indicating shortages of ballot papers at some polling stations were raised, resulting in a repeat voting process on 26 October 2024. The IEC, however, explained that the shortage was because those eligible for advance voting did not respond to its call for people to indicate their polling stations where they would cast their votes. The IEC stated that it consequently only printed the number of ballot papers, guided by the number of people who had responded to their inquiry, resulting in the unexpected shortages.

e) Multi-parties, nomination and registration of candidates

Political parties and candidates essentially play a crucial role in electoral process and the functioning of democracy. They not only represent the interests and opinions of citizens and offer them the possibility of influencing politics and decisions that affect them, but they also increase participation in the electoral processes. In Botswana, the right of political parties to form and operate is legally guaranteed and respected. This allows - people to organise themselves into competing parties, ensuring a representation of diverse views and interests in the political arena.

Botswana witnessed several parties vying for power. The Umbrella Democratic Change (UDC) was the strongest challenge to the BDP and eventually won ahead of the Botswana Congress Party (BCP) and the Botswana Patriotic Front (BPF). The competitiveness of these political parties strengthened the multi-party system, incentivising political parties to develop and offer the electorate innovative policies that resonate with their interests. Botswana's electoral practices, including the low nomination fees offer valuable lessons for other SADC countries. By adopting such practices, nations can promote inclusivity and enhance participation, thereby strengthening their own democratic processes. Nomination for both parliament and local councils was carried out in a peaceful manner. The nomination fees of P500 (USD 37) and P100 (USD 7) for parliamentary and local council candidates respectively, are among the lowest on the continent. The Botswana nomination fees afforded all citizens, especially women, youth, and persons with disabilities, the opportunity to be nominated without much financial hindrance.

f) Media Engagement

Botswana's legal framework guarantees fundamental freedoms, including freedom of the media and access to information for all citizens, especially during elections. The Code of Conduct for broadcasting service licensees during the election is intended to assist the Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority (BOCRA) in carrying out its duty of monitoring and supervising the broadcasting services as outlined in the Act. This Code of Conduct aims at giving general rules to all broadcasting service licenses when covering political party/candidate broadcasts during the electoral process. The media played a vital role in Botswana's elections, providing an arena for the exchange of information and opinion and a means for politicians to communicate with the public. In the run-up to the October 2024 elections, the Botswana media played a critical role, hence stands out as commendable and worth emulating. Private media gave an equal amount of coverage to all contesting parties and candidates, particularly campaign events, and private radio stations aired political events across the country. The public broadcaster Botswana Television (BTV) aired a live debate featuring the four leading candidates, allowing them to share their political messages. Dr. Mokgweetsi E.K. Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana and the BDP; Mr. Dumelang Saleshando, President of the BCP; Mr. Duma Boko, President of the UDC; and Mr. Mephato Reatile, President of the BPF shared a platform, articulating their party manifestos and outlining their vision for the country. The debate provided voters with valuable insights into the candidates' priorities and the country's future direction, giving them a chance to weigh candidates' proposals in making their choices.

g) Role of Domestic and International observers

Notwithstanding the important role that election observation play, the Mission observed minimal involvement of domestic observers. Civil society organisation did not manage to cover many polling stations in terms of deployment of local observers. However, political parties managed to deploy party agents, with UDC and BDP presence noticed at almost all the visited polling stations.

The Mission, however, applauds the Botswana MoFA and the IEC for facilitating an efficient accreditation process for international observers. In addition to the few domestic observers, international organisations such as the SEOM, AUEOM, ACG-EOM, SADC ECF, and National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE) also observed the Botswana General Elections.



Presiding Officers interacting with ZESN-ESN-SA International Election Observers

3. ELECTION DAY OBSERVATION

On Election Day, the Mission deployed two (2) teams of observers to cover five (5) constituencies of the country where they observed opening, voting, closing and counting procedures. The Mission's observers visited several polling stations in urban, peri-urban and rural areas. The Mission was granted unhindered access to the voting areas and observed opening, voting closing and counting processes. Overall, the atmosphere was generally peaceful and calm on Election Day. The Mission assessed the performance of polling officials and conduct of Election Day operations as mostly good.

a) Opening of Voting Stations

The Botswana Electoral Law provides that polling stations should open at 6:30 a.m. and close at 7:00 p.m. for voting. The Mission observed the opening of voting stations in two (2) polling stations and noted that the opening procedure was adhered to. Long and winding queues were observed in the early morning and at intervals throughout the day. The Mission observed that in Tent A at South Gate of Glen Valley in Gaborone North, polling began at 8:00 a.m. instead of 6:30 a.m. due to the late delivery of voting booths. The same station was further delayed by the UDC party candidate, who demanded to know why there were two polling stations instead of one. At Tshwaragano B Polling station Naledi South District in Gaborone South Constituency, voting started 15 minutes late.

Despite the late arrival of polling booths at the Tent at South Gate of Glen Valley Polling Station, all the other polling stations observed had the necessary materials, such as ballot boxes, ballot papers, ink markers, voters' rolls, official stamps and ballot booths. In most stations visited, voters were able to cast their vote efficiently. However, in some polling stations, the process was a bit slow. Most of the polling stations visited were situated in neutral venues, accessible to most voters and were further secured by police officers who maintained a visible presence at the polling stations.

b) Polling Officials and Party Agents

Each station had an average of seven polling staff, mostly women. Polling officials were easily identifiable, as they wore appropriate regalia. The Mission observed that Lady Mitchinson Primary School, Borwa Junior Secondary, Gaborone West Customary Court, Tloga Tloga Junior and Secondary and Itumelang Primary School Polling stations had 100% female officials. It is commendable that the officials were free to talk about their duties and responsibilities. The Mission also noted that the major contesting political parties had deployed agents at most polling stations who were also conversant with tracking processes as they unfolded.

c) Voting Procedures and Processes

The voting procedures were adhered to. However, there were some inconsistencies in the application of voting procedures, namely the handling and signing of voters' cards. Ballot papers were issued to voters in an efficient and secure manner. However, in some polling stations that the Mission observed, voters did not show the presiding officer the back of the ballot paper to disclose the official stamp before placing it in the ballot box, as stipulated in section 54(e) of the Elections Act.

The layout of the majority of polling stations visited was satisfactory. Properly positioned polling booths ensured the secrecy of the ballot. There was no evidence of ballot-box stuffing, as ballot boxes were opened and shown to voters, observers, and party agents before voting began. The Mission noted that Botswana still uses metallic ballot boxes, which has the potential to compromise transparency.

The Mission observed clear signage outside the voting stations to facilitate smooth voter flow. Security agents were present at all polling stations visited by the team, and their conduct was professional.

d) Accessibility and Inclusivity

Most voting stations were accessible to individuals using wheelchairs and crutches, and ramps were in place where necessary. Generally, the provision of chairs for nursing mothers and individuals with health issues was commendable. Additionally, special arrangements allowed the elderly and persons with disabilities to go in front of the queues, emphasising a commitment to inclusivity. Moreover, the presence of trained staff to assist those in need fostered a supportive environment. Clear signage pathways ensured that all individuals could easily navigate the voting area. These efforts facilitated participation and underscored and reinforced the importance of equal access to democratic processes for everyone.

Youth participation was noted, with young electoral officials demonstrating friendliness, courtesy, and good training. Significant involvement of youth both as voters and as polling officials was observed. Their professionalism contributed to the efficient management of the voting process. There was a mixed composition of the security officers at the stations visited by the Mission, with the inclusion of the young demographic being noted. The Mission commends the women of Botswana for their participation as voters, polling staff, security officers and candidate delegates. Women constitute 54% of registered voters in Botswana. However, there is a low number of women contesting for political positions. Of 263 Parliamentary candidates, only 28 were women, constituting just 10.6%. Low levels of women participation is a global challenge facing several jurisdictions in Africa and beyond. The government of Botswana should ensure women participate not only as election officials and voters but as candidates too.

e) Voter Education

The Mission noted that voters demonstrated knowledge of their voting stations and fully understood what they were expected to do. Minimal incidents of redirected or assisted voters demonstrated this, highlighting the effectiveness of the voter education efforts done by the IEC and its electoral partners. Clear voter education posters with diagrams displaying the voting process helped guide polling staff and voters, facilitating smooth voter flow and order. Further, the Mission concludes there was structured voter education by the IEC, which positively impacted the 2024 electoral process, as can be seen from the high voter turnout (80%) and relatively low percentage of invalid/blank votes of 10,145 (1.2%) against the 835,249 (98.8%) valid votes.

f) Closing of Polling Stations

The Mission observed closing at the Tent at the South Gate of Glen Valley Polling Station in Gaborone North. The station closed at 9:00 p.m. to compensate for delays in opening and allow voters to exercise their rights. The closing procedures were adhered to and were done transparently in the presence of party agents, police officers, and observers.

Despite the centralised counting process, ballot boxes and other materials were transported securely and were closely monitored and escorted by party agents and the police. The team observed that the handing over of ballot boxes was done in a transparent manner in the presence of party agents, observers and the police.

4. POST-ELECTION OBSERVATION

a) Counting Procedure and Results Management

The Mission observed the counting of votes and closely followed and appreciated the handing over of ballot boxes. A rigorous verification exercise was observed before handing over the ballot boxes to the counting officials. The verified results were written on a flipchart and pasted on the wall in liaison with the party Agents. The ballot boxes handing over and counting process was open and transparent, allowing observers, party agents and election officials to witness the entire procedure. The Mission noted that there were designated counting officers who were recruited specifically for the counting of ballots. The Mission noted that at every stage of the results management process, party and candidate agents were allowed access and given copies of the results forms. Accredited observers and representatives of the media were also granted access to the counting centres. The IEC announced the official results of the elections in a timely manner. According to the results announced, the UDC won 36 seats.

Table 2: Distribution of the Parliamentary Election Results

Party	Number of Seats Won	Parliament Seats %
UDC	36	59.02%
BCP	15	24.59%
BPF	5	8.20%
BDP	4	6.56%
Independent	1	1.64%

Source: Gallapher Index

Before completion of official announcement of the results, the incumbent Mokgweetsi Masisi conceded defeat and congratulated President Duma Boko in a televised statement. The incoming President-elect was sworn in on November 1, 2024.

b) Post-election Political Environment

On the morning of 1 November 2024, incumbent president Mokgweetsi Masisi conceded defeat and ensured a peaceful power transfer. Transition of power between two distinct administrations in Botswana was remarkably smooth, marking another milestone in the country's democratic journey as Mokgweetsi Masisi of BDP handed over power to Advocate Duma Boko of UDC. Botswana has a long-standing tradition of democratic succession with presidents stepping down after completing their terms of office. However, the 2024 transfer of power represented a shift between two different political parties rather than a continuation within the BDP.

President Boko was sworn-in on 1 November 2024 by Chief Justice Terence Rannowane, allowing him to form the first government since independence with no BDP participation. The transition is commendable, and the outgoing president conceded defeat before finalisation of vote counting, pledging to “respectfully step aside and participate in a smooth transition process ahead of inauguration”, assuring the incoming President to count on him and “to always provide whatever guidance” that might be needed. He further expressed that he is proud of Botswana’s democratic processes, hence “respects the will of the people and will retreat to being a loyal opposition”



ZESN-ESN-SA Election Observers following proceedings at SEOM, AUEOM, ECF-SADC Announcement of Preliminary Statements in a peaceful post-election period

5. LESSONS LEARNT

- Involving women and youth as election officials enhances their participation in electoral processes. This engagement empowers these groups and fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility towards democratic practices.
- Active and committed citizenry who were patient and waited as votes were being counted.
- Role of unarmed security officers who were not interfering and non-intimidating in executing their duties but still maintained peace and order.
- The IEC had designated counting officers who were recruited specifically for the counting of ballots.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on its findings, and in the spirit and commitment to improvement of the framework and conduct of future elections in Botswana, the Mission recommends the following:

- The IEC should ensure that advance voting is conducted in a way that builds and promotes public trust in the Commission.
- To increase public trust in the process and the Commission, consider improving the administration of advance voting and the location of the IEC.
- 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.
- 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.
- Consider the use of translucent boxes, as this practice enhances transparency in the voting process.

7. CONCLUSION

Despite minor logistical and technical challenges, the Mission noted that the elections were conducted in a generally peaceful and transparent atmosphere. The efficient management and adherence to polling procedures, the participation of political party agents, satisfactory gender representation among polling officials, and the involvement of youth contributed to the smooth conduct of the elections. The Mission concludes that the Botswana IEC was prepared and adhered to the electoral laws and generally complied with the international commitments for democratic elections. To this end, the ZESN-ESN commends the people of Botswana for their commitment to democratic rule and exhorts them to continue walking the path.