

Report of the Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs on the Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections and Standards and Norms for Elections dated 13 June 2006

1. SADC PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES GOVERNING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Principles and Guidelines for Elections were adopted in Mauritius in 2004. They govern the conduct of elections in SADC member countries with an aim of enhancing transparency, credibility of elections, democratic governance to make sure that elections are free and fair and to create an environment in which elections result are accepted by those who are participating in the election. The main body of the principles and guidelines include *inter alia* the following:

- (a) Full participation of the citizens in the political process during elections.
- (b) Freedom of association.
- (c) Political tolerance.
- (d) Regular interval for elections as provided for in the country constitution.
- (e) Equal opportunity for all political parties to access State media.
- (f) Equal opportunity to exercise the right to vote and be voted for.
- (g) Independence of the judiciary.
- (h) Impartiality of electoral institutions and voter education.

The principles are developed with an intention of encouraging the adherence to broad human rights principles and norms, which would create an environment of peace and political stability. They are not binding to any state or government, but are voluntary for all member countries. Thus, their implementation solely resides with the individual government or country and in compliance with the elections standards and/or constitution of that country.

2. SADC NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR ELECTIONS

The SADC Norms and Standards for Elections are based on the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) or African Union Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa that was adopted at the 38th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in 2002. They are also designed in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The main aspects of the norms and standards are the following:

- (a) The recognition that proper elections should include a process in which voters are registered to vote and have a right to be voted for.
- (b) Voting would be secret
- (c) Individuals have a right to freedom of association and free to express themselves during elections.
- (d) Adherence to multi-party democracy.

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