

SADC observers will monitor Botswana elections

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More than 70 observers from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Electoral Observer Mission (SEOM) will assess the October 24 general elections in Botswana, says International Relations and Cooperation Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane.



International Relations and Cooperation Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane has been tasked with leading the team monitoring Botswana general election later this month. Image: GCIS

"In Botswana, our oldest democracy in the SADC, we will be able to observe practices honed and developed over decades of democracy. We would like to congratulate Botswana on its track record to date and its valued contribution to building democratic institutions in the region. We trust that the elections on 24 October will build on this proud tradition," she said.

Nkoana-Mashabane said President Jacob Zuma, as the chairman of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, had given her the task of leading the SEOM.

Following the launch of the SEOM, Nkoana-Mashabane said members of the Organ Troika will engage with the leadership of Botswana as well as the chairman of the electoral commission in that country to be kept updated about preparations for the elections.

Botswana held its first multiparty elections in 1965 ahead of the declaration of independence.

According to Nkoana-Mashabane, the upcoming 11th democratic election in Botswana is a testimony to the strides that have been made in the region towards the consolidation of democracy and the promotion of good governance.

The SEOM is expected to consider the general conduct of the elections guided by the principles of full participation of citizens in the political process; freedom of association; political tolerance; equal opportunity for all political parties to access the state media; equal opportunity to exercise the right to vote and be voted for; and an acceptance and respect by political parties of the results after the elections have been proclaimed as free and fair by the electoral authorities in accordance with the law.

The presence and deployment of the SEOM helps to enhance the credibility of the electoral process, and encourages the development of a culture of democratic norms and values in the region.

SADC is expected to release its preliminary findings on the electoral process on 26 October.

"We want to take this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment and support to the people of Botswana, and to wish them a successful election," said Nkoana-Mashabane.

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