

SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM

NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR ELECTIONS IN THE SADC REGION

*Adopted by the SADC Parliamentary Forum Plenary Assembly
on the
25th March 2001
Windhoek, Namibia*

A. INTRODUCTION

The experience gained by the SADC Parliamentary Forum in observing elections in Namibia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Mauritius is quite revealing. There have been significant gains in promoting democratic governance in the SADC region since the advent of the re-introduction of multi-party politics in the early 1990s. Periodic elections are being conducted nearly every five years. In a few cases, elections have resulted in the change of Governments in a peaceful manner. Indeed, most SADC countries are making progress in managing succession peacefully. In addition, some of the elections have produced balanced parliamentary representation which reflect the broad spectrum of the different shades of opinions in a country. Some of the one party dictatorial constitutions have been duly amended to reflect the new dispensations.

Regrettably, however, neither the constitutions, nor the electoral systems or the practices of most institutions have been aligned to the new multi-party democratic culture. This applies to intra-party democracy or lack of it across the board. Levels of tolerance of contesting views are still too low as well as the empowerment of women to participate in decision-making process in Government. Furthermore, a lot still remains to be done to improve the political environment in which elections are conducted and ensuring that the existing legal and institutional frameworks work independently and impartially. There is still need to address issues relating to leveling the playing field for all the players contesting elections, inequality in the funding of political parties, inadequate access to state-owned media and election related violence.

What is being said above is not equally applicable to all countries. We must record, for example, the well-known fact that some countries in the SADC region have served as models of democratic governance for over three decades, namely Botswana and Mauritius both of which have made phenomenal economic gains. In addition, the new democratic states which, emerged in the 1990s in the southern part of Southern Africa have brought in new systems and practices which promote legitimate elections and electoral institutions such as independent electoral commissions. The above observations are fully documented in reports on elections in the four countries named above and on research done by the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) on the state of elections in the SADC region as a whole.

As its contribution to the emergence of plural, multi-party democracy, the SADC Parliamentary Forum has taken a keen interest in election observation and electoral processes. The immediate objective of election observation is to determine the openness, freeness and fairness and

elections in the SADC Region. However, the long term goal is to use lessons learned and experiences gained in election observation to help in strengthening the democratic processes and transparency in the conduct of elections in SADC countries. Furthermore, it is expected that observation will enable the SADC Parliamentary Forum to develop a procedural manual with guidelines for observer missions. It is against this background that the workshop was being held.

The purpose of the workshop was to use the lessons learned and experiences gained in election observation in Namibia, Mozambique, Mauritius and Zimbabwe to make implementable recommendations to SADC Government leaders and SADC Parliaments. **The recommendations that were finally made at the end of the workshop are targeted at strengthening electoral institutions, reforming outdated legal frameworks and electoral practices, and entrenching the democratic process in the conduct of elections thus minimising disputes over the outcome of elections among contesting political parties.** The recommendations which form part of this report if accepted are expected to significantly contribute to **political stability** in Southern Africa.

B. PREAMBLE

Cognisant of the above situation, we the election observer delegations of the SADC Parliamentary Forum created pursuant to Article 10(6) of the SADC Treaty:

- **Recalling** the Commitment of the Heads of States and Government to democracy and to the individual's inalienable Right to participate by means of free and democratic processes in framing the society in which he or she lives; and to peace and stability in the SADC region; the Windhoek Declaration on Freedom of the Press; the Blantyre Declaration on Gender Equality of 1997; the Harare Declaration of 1991 and other International Conventions and Instruments to which all SADC countries are Signatories;
- **Recalling** the provisions of Article 5 of the Constitution of the SADC Parliamentary Forum which, inter-alia, calls for the promotion of the principles of human rights and democracy and the encouragement of good governance, transparency and accountability within the SADC region;

- **Recalling** the role of the SADC Parliamentary Forum in Election Observation in the SADC region;

for the purpose of institutionalising and strengthening electoral institutions including democratic processes DO HEREBY make the following recommendations relating to elections and individual rights; elections and the Government; and fostering transparency and integrity in electoral process.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

PART 1

ELECTIONS AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

1. Registration and Nomination

Problem

While Voter registration is a prerequisite to smooth elections it is common knowledge that some individuals intending to exercise their right to vote or to be voted as candidates in an election have been prevented from doing so through cumbersome voter registration requirements, nomination technical details, removal from the voters' register, intimidation through political violence and kidnapping of candidates. For a voter to be properly identified as a national of a particular state, there is need to have an identity.

Recommendations

- (i) The right to vote and to be voted for should be accepted as a birth right in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Therefore, eligible individuals should have the right to non-discriminatory voter registration and nomination procedures. This right should be enshrined in the constitution of a country.
- (ii) There should be provisions and practical arrangements for continuous voter registration and an updated voters' register must be made available to all stakeholders in the elections.

- (iii) During nomination and selection of candidates all political parties contesting elections must ensure adequate gender balance in compliance with the SADC Blantyre Declaration on Gender and Development (1997) calling on all political parties contesting an election to commit themselves to a minimum of 30 per cent women party candidates by the year 2005.
- (iv) Provision be made for people with disability to participate fully in the electoral process.
- (v) Provisions should be made to ensure that prospective voters are provided with a form of national identity card in good time for registration.

2. Voting and Secrecy

Problem

There are numerous cases in our countries whereby eligible voters have been unable or prevented from exercising their right to vote through violence, lack of information on location of polling station, intimidation and misinformation.

Furthermore, there are situations whereby the secrecy of the ballot has been severely compromised by making voters queue behind their party candidates, village headmen and threats based on the ability of competing candidates/parties to use modern communication equipment to tell which way a voter has voted.

Recommendations

- (i) The right of eligible individuals to vote unimpeded and the right to vote in secrecy in a ballot box should be protected and enshrined in the constitutions of the SADC countries.
- (ii) Any measures such as political violence, kidnapping, murder, threats and sanctions such as denial of development opportunities in opposition controlled areas that prevent eligible individuals to register to vote and to vote in secrecy should be perpetually outlawed by SADC member states.

- (iii) Illiterate persons, old people and persons with disabilities should be given assistance when voting by persons of their choice.

3. Freedom of Association and Expression

Problem

It is common in some of the SADC countries that members of the electorate belonging to other parties have been intimidated, beaten up, tortured and even murdered for belonging to opposing parties and for openly expressing their support for their preferred party. Yet one of the fundamental principles of multi-party democracy and political development process is that there should be freedom of association and expression. This principle is violated from one election to another.

Recommendations

- (i) The sanctity of the freedom of association and expression should be protected and strictly adhered to.
- (ii) Relevant electoral laws and code of conduct should provide for this sanctity.
- (iii) Governments should establish by law ad hoc Electoral Tribunals to enforce electoral laws and codes of conduct during elections. They should deal with election conflicts.

PART 2

ELECTIONS AND THE GOVERNMENT

1. Commitment to Pluralism, Multi-party Democracy and Politics

Problem

The meeting welcomed the commitment to pluralism and multi-party democracy in the first place by all SADC countries. However, the meeting noted that there is still inadequate and lip service commitment to multi-party democracy and politics among some of our leaders and politicians. They talk democracy but use undemocratic means to gain or remain in power. Yet the success

of multi-party democracy and politics depends to a large extent on Government, political parties and other stakeholders committing themselves to upholding the values and practices that go with these concepts. The existence and sustainability of pluralism, multi-party democracy and politics again depends on the Government's belief in a democratic culture and wish to practice democracy. It calls for the Government to be tolerant of opposing political views and to harmoniously co-exist with opposition political parties.

Recommendation

The concepts of pluralism, multi-party democracy and politics should be enshrined in the constitution as the preferred form of political development and a basis for good governance. All stakeholders should commit themselves to pluralism, multi-party democracy and politics as a condition for participating in the political process of the country.

2. Date of Elections

Problem

In most SADC countries the date as to when elections are held is a prerogative of the ruling party if not of the President or Prime Minister. The announcement for when the elections will take place is often not made in good time and as such does not allow all stakeholders to prepare for elections. This has been one of the many sources of election conflicts resulting in some opposition parties boycotting the elections.

Recommendations

- (i) SADC Governments should ensure that the dates for general election are fixed by provisions in their Constitutions or electoral laws.
- (ii) If this is not possible the Head of Government should be required by the electoral law to give adequate notice of not less than 90 days (3 months) and not more than 120 days (4 months) from the date of dissolution of Parliament for an election date to give sufficient time to the Electoral Commission to prepare for the elections and to demonstrate fair play.

- (iii) The Parliament of each SADC State should be involved in the alteration or fixing of election dates.

3. Misuse of Public Resources and Funding of Political Activities

Problem

In most countries the ruling party and its government seek an unfair advantage over opposition parties through the use of public funds and assets for its political activities, particularly meeting campaign expenses. When opposition parties get a share of public funds, there are complaints that such funds are inadequate, payment is delayed and given at the will of the ruling party to the disadvantage of opposition parties.

Recommendations

- (i) In the interest of creating conditions for a level playing field for all political parties and promoting the integrity of the electoral process, parties should not use public funds in the electoral process. The electoral law should prohibit the Government to aid or to abet any party gaining unfair advantage.
- (ii) Where a policy decision is taken to financially support political parties with taxpayers' money, which is necessitated by the poor resource background of most political parties, an agreed upon formula must be used and adhered to in allocating funds to the contesting parties. A commonly used formula is according to the number of seats each party holds in Parliament.
- (iii) Those countries that are not yet funding contesting political parties should introduce the necessary legislation to do so in order to foster uniformity and leveling the playing field.
- (iv) There must be accountability in the use of public funds.

4. Government, Political Parties, NGOs and the Media

Problem

In the majority of SADC countries the state owned media is controlled by Government. This often causes imbalance in the playing field between the stakeholders mainly the ruling party and opposition parties. It contributes to lack of transparency through selective reporting. Where the opposition parties are given air time, it is too short and the timing may be inappropriate. The recent emergence of a vibrant private media has greatly contributed to some balance in political coverage of both ruling and opposition parties.

Recommendations

- (i) Governments should take the emergence of private media as a healthy development in the institutionalisation of the democratic process, the conduct of elections and should therefore refrain from taking decisions and actions that thwart the development of a strong private media. There should therefore be a domestic information law that reaffirms the existence of private media.
- (ii) Governments should take cognisance of the fact that the involvement of political parties in the electoral process fosters the transparency of the system and generates public confidence in the system. Opposition parties should therefore also be given equal opportunity and agreed upon time and space on the state owned media to put their announcements and broadcasts and advertisements. This is a true test of the Government's commitment to pluralism and multi-party democracy and a democratic political process.
- (iii) The role of the civil society, mainly in election monitoring and civic education, should be recognised by Governments.

5. Electoral Commissions

Problem

Electoral Commissions do play a very important role in the preparation for and conduct of elections. However, the establishment, composition, status, independence, impartiality and professionalism of some of the Electoral Commissions have come under serious scrutiny and doubts particularly from opposition parties and members of the public. These commissions are accused of being pro the ruling party that has appointed them.

Recommendations

- (i) In the interest of promoting and entrenching pluralism, multi-party democracy and the integrity of the electoral process, the complete independence and impartiality of the Electoral Commission in dealing with all political parties should be reaffirmed in the constitution.
- (ii) The commissioners should be selected by a panel of judges set up by the Chief Justice or the equivalent, on the basis of the individual's calibre, stature, public respect, competence, impartiality and their knowledge of elections and political development processes. The selection of commissioners should be done in consultation with all political parties and other interested stakeholders. The selected commissioners are to be approved by Parliament.
- (iii) To further enhance the independence and impartiality of the Electoral Commission it should have its own budget directly voted for by Parliament and not get its allocation from a Ministry or a Government Department.
- (iv) The Electoral Law should empower the Electoral Commission to recruit and dismiss its own support staff on the basis of professionalism and competence rather than getting seconded staff from Ministries and Departments. Such staff have no loyalty to the Electoral Commission.
- (v) Security of tenure of electoral commissioners should be entrenched in the constitutions of the SADC countries.

PART 3

FOSTERING TRANSPARENCY AND INTEGRITY IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

It is necessary to start this section by defining what the terms transparency, leveling the playing field and free and fair elections mean in the context of managing elections. These concepts are important in fostering transparency and integrity in the electoral process.

Transparency

Transparency refers to the degree of openness in the election process. It is important in the conduct of elections in that it enables the public at large, political parties and candidates to be informed on a timely basis about developments concerning electoral matters. It is a confidence building measure.

Level Playing Field

In the context of elections, the expression “level playing field” refers to a requirement that the election rules and regulations apply fairly to all political parties and candidates. It requires that the Electoral Commission deals openly and on equal terms with each of the political parties to enhance transparency.

Free and Fair Elections

Whether elections are free and fair is a judgmental position on the whole process of conducting elections.

Problem

Experience has so far shown that the above three concepts feature prominently when elections are held in any of the SADC countries. Opposition parties often complain about the lack of transparency in the manner in which Electoral Commissions manage elections, the playing field being skewed in favour of the ruling party and for the losing parties the elections being not free and fair. What is discussed below are some ingredients of good practices that Governments should seriously consider adopting to enhance transparency, ensure a level playing field, and guarantee free and fair elections.

1. Registration of Voters

Problem

Registration of voters in SADC countries is a once off thing, done when elections are eminent. Experience shows that this practice leaves out a substantial proportion of eligible voters. A properly compiled register of voters provides a sound basis for the organisation of free and fair elections. The compilation of a satisfactory voters' register is a biggest test of the impartiality and technical competence of the Electoral Commission.

Recommendation

Registration of voters should therefore be a continuous exercise and not just wait for an election.

2. Voter Education

In some cases voters' education is left to NGOs and political parties. Due to lack of funds it is inadequately funded and poorly managed.

Recommendation

The Electoral Commission should be required by law to provide for a satisfactory and adequately funded voter education programme that helps voters to be acquainted with the voting procedures and other aspects of civic awareness.

3. Boundary Delimitation Commissions

Problem

The main function of a Boundary Delimitation Commission is to draw the boundaries of constituencies in a fair manner applying a stipulated formula such as the electoral quota which uses the average electorate of the constituencies as the basic size of the electorate to be placed in a constituency. Experience has shown that this is not always adhered to.

Recommendations

- (i) In the interest of promoting plural, multi-party democracy and enhancing integrity of the electoral process, the independence and impartiality of the Boundary Delimitation Commission in drawing up constituency boundaries should be reaffirmed in the constitutions of SADC countries. The tenure of office of the Commissioners should be guaranteed in the constitution.
- (ii) The drawing up of constituency boundaries should be left to the technical competence of the Boundary Delimitation Commission without political interference. The Commission should consult stakeholders in this process. Gerrymandering should be outlawed.
- (iii) Recommendations of the Boundary Delimitation Commission should not be altered by any stakeholder.

4. Nomination Process

Problem

The nomination process has been a vulnerable stage in election preparation. Prospective candidates have been prevented from submitting their nomination papers due to violence, procedural deficiencies and inadequate role of the courts.

Recommendation

It is therefore recommended that technical requirements/rules should be kept to the absolute minimum. The Electoral Commission should have powers to extend the time for particular nomination centre and prospective candidates should have the right to appeal to the High Court.

5. Election Campaign

Problem

Election campaign in a number of SADC countries is often riddled with violence, murder, intimidation, destruction of property, unequal access to state owned media and accusations by

opposition parties of a lack of a “level playing field” among the parties contesting an election.

Recommendations

The Electoral Commission and all stakeholders in the electoral process should therefore be required by law and be empowered to ensure that political parties and candidates should denounce violence in elections in order to ensure that:

- unimpeded freedom of campaign throughout the country;
- free and unimpeded access to Voters’ Rolls;
- all Government Security Forces should act impartially and professionally;
- Presidential candidates must be provided with free and adequate security during the election process;
- equal and free access to the state owned media;
- a code of conduct developed through consensus from all political parties to guide behaviour in the conduct of campaigns; and
- reasonable safeguards at political meetings, rallies, polling stations and party premises.

The ad hoc Electoral Tribunal shall enforce the foregoing recommendations.

6. Funding of Political Campaigns

Problem

The funding of election campaigns is an area where the misuse of public funds is common and the playing field is not even. Experience in most countries is that the ruling party is well resourced (financially and assets wise) while opposition parties are poorly funded. Ceilings on political expenditure are either not there or ignored by all. The rich engaged in lavish expenditure to win votes.

Recommendation

The Electoral Commission should therefore be legally empowered to prohibit certain types of expenditures so as to limit the undue impact of money on the democratic process and the outcome of an election. It should be empowered to ensure that proper election expenses returns are submitted on time, to inspect party accounts, and for parties to have properly audited and verified accounts.

7. Role of the Courts

Experience shows that the courts come into the electoral process in terms of:

- (i) handling appeals during the registration and nomination stages;
- (ii) dealing with election offences; and
- (iii) attending to election petitions.

Problem

In most countries the courts are either under-funded or understaffed or too bureaucratic to deal promptly with election petitions and offences. Yet the courts are an important player in ensuring a plural and multi-party democratic process.

Recommendations

- (i) The courts should be strengthened in terms of both human and financial resources to enable them adequately deal with election petitions and offences and to ensure a level playing field and free and fair elections.
- (ii) There must be time limits for resolving election petitions.
- (iii) In enhancing democracy all electable positions should be subject of judicial review.
- (iv) All cases emanating from electoral petitions should be subject to electoral review.

8. The Electoral Commission and the Media

Problem

Technical competence, impartiality in dealing with political parties and independence of government control are not the only qualities of a good Electoral Commission. Good relations with the media is a desirable quality in that it fosters public confidence in the electoral process. Experience from the SADC countries is that the relations between the Electoral Commission and the private media is not only a good one. Yet the media plays an important role in terms of fostering the integrity and transparency of the Electoral Commission and on building public confidence in the activities of the Commission. Therefore, the Electoral Commission and the media should view themselves as allies and not as adversaries in the institutionalisation of the democratic process in the conduct of elections.

Recommendations

The following good practices are offered for adoption by Electoral Commissions in our Region:

- (i) periodic meetings with representatives of the media at every important stage of the electoral process as a way of communicating with the general public; and
- (ii) general media briefings and general statements to the media to avoid misrepresentation.

9. Polling Stations

Problem

In some SADC countries, polling stations are in private houses, shops and stores. This compromises the integrity of the voting process and the secrecy of the ballot.

Recommendation

Polling stations should be public places such as schools, tents, mobile vehicles that are neutral.

10. Ballot Boxes

Problem

The nature of ballot boxes has become the subject of concern in the voting process. Some countries still use opaque wooden boxes which defeat the call for transparency in the electoral process. Other countries are a step ahead in that they use transparent ballot boxes in line with the general call for transparency in the electoral process.

Recommendation

Those SADC countries that still use opaque wooden ballot boxes are urged to discard them in favour of transparent ballot boxes.

11. Counting of Votes

Problem

The counting of votes is another area in the electoral process riddled with accusations of elections being rigged in favour of the winning party. The system of transporting ballot boxes from polling stations to a central counting centre creates opportunities for missing ballot boxes and other ballot boxes being sneaked in. This is a violation of free and fair elections.

Recommendations

- (i) The counting of votes should be done at the polling station where the candidates and/or their election agents are present. Such candidates and agents should be allowed to remain with the boxes from closure of polling station to counting of the votes.
- (ii) There should be immediate release of official election results on completion of counting, signed by returning officers and confirmed by party agents.
- (iii) Verification and reconciliation of ballots should be done before counting begins and this should be done in the presence of candidates and all their agents.

- (iv) In the event of a long lapse of time between the completion of voting and the commencement of the counting, the ballot boxes should be sealed and opened in the presence of all polling agents.
- (v) The Electoral Commission should prepare and make available a time-table of the electoral process, including the acquisition of electoral materials, packaging and distribution to polling centres. The time-table, including all stages of electoral events should, by law, be made accessible to all stakeholders.

12. Acceptance of Election Results

Problem

It is common in some SADC countries that both ruling and opposition parties do not easily accept election results. Some ruling parties as well as opposition parties do not accept the legitimacy of each other. In some cases, opposition parties are denied funds that are due to them. The tendency therefore is for opposition parties to act outside parliamentary jurisdiction.

Recommendations

- i. The culture of accepting election results should be cultivated and encouraged, especially when election observers have certified the results as free and fair.
- ii. Political parties contesting elections must accept defeat after fair contests.

13. Managing Post Election Conflicts

Problem

Lack of confidence, trust and dialogue has led to conflicts among political leaders before, during and after elections.

Recommendations

- i. There is need for consensus building.

- ii. There is need to create an institutional machinery at the SADC Parliamentary Forum level to handle conflicts that arise before, during and after elections.
- iii. SADC countries should work out a mechanism of ensuring that there is a harmonious relationship and cooperation between the ruling parties before and after elections.

14. Role of Observers

Problem

There is a growing realisation among SADC countries that have embraced multi-party democracy that the presence of observers (local, regional and international) generates confidence in the political process and international standing of the country. It often assists the electorate and the losing political parties and candidates to accept the election results if the election is judged by the observers to have been held under legitimate conditions. However, what is disputed is what constitutes free and fair elections and on the part of the host government who should be allowed to observe the elections. Some international bodies and local observers are suspected of having their own agenda and may not be impartial and have therefore been barred by host governments from observing the elections.

Recommendations

Despite these concerns, election observers should be accepted as part of the process to institutionalise multi-party democracy and as a mechanism to persuade governments to adhere to the ingredients of free and fair elections. These ingredients include:

- i. acceptance by all political parties that all eligible citizens have had a fair opportunity to register as voters and to cast their votes;
- ii. political parties contesting the election having a fair opportunity to campaign including an equitable access to the state owned media;
- iii. the Government of the day creating a “level playing field” condition in which all political parties have the opportunity to put their policies and programmes to the electorate;

- iv. the removal of any existing state of emergency before an election campaign begins;
- v. certification by all Polling Agents that the Voting was free and fair at respective polling stations;
- vi. the acceptance by the host government of election observers as a factor in fostering transparency, integrity and in institutionalising the democratic process in the conduct of elections;

15. The Role of the SADC Parliamentary Forum in Election Observation

Problem

The Forum has been experiencing difficulties in some member countries in respect of timely accreditation; confusion about who has authority to invite the Forum to observe the Elections; and a common understanding of how the lessons from observing elections are shared with the stakeholders. A problem also exists in SADC because of the absence of a regional body that can assist in resolving electoral disputes.

Recommendations

- (i) The SADC Parliamentary Forum should continue to observe elections so as to promote democratic practices and sustainable peace in the region in line with the objectives of the Forum.
- (ii) SADC Parliamentary Forum Observer Missions should observe the pre-election (including voter registration), election, and post-election periods. The timing of the pre-election entry point shall be determined by the Secretariat in consultation with stakeholders.
- (iii) The SADC Parliamentary Forum should widely circulate its election Observation Reports and engage stakeholders in the aftermath of elections.
- (iv) All Governments should endorse a standing invitation to the SADC Parliamentary Forum to observe elections whenever

they are held in any SADC country without having to wait for a formal invitation from the host Government.

- (v) In line with the SADC Declaration which **inter alia** calls upon all Governments to ensure the full participation of women with a minimum of 30% of women in all areas of decision making, including Parliaments. The reform of all laws that impede the full participation of women in elections, electoral processes and management of elections. To this end, each and every recommendation automatically incorporates provisions that are designed to advance the women's role in the governance of SADC countries.

16. Code of Conduct for the Forum as Regional Observers

Problem

Whereas observers have the noble duty to see that elections are held in a free and fair atmosphere it does not mean that they are 100% impartial. Some election observers may have their own hidden agendas. They therefore cannot carry out their work without some guidelines on their behaviour. However, SADC Parliamentary Forum undertakes to observe elections impartially in line with the Constitution and Code of Conduct for the Forum.

Recommendations

Election results should be accepted by both ruling and opposition parties and what is due to opposition parties should be given without delay in accordance with the law.

It is therefore recommended that Governments should take a policy position recognising the role of observers, as long as:

- i. observers must be non-partisan at all times and seen to be so. They should not express partisan political views whether by word, symbol, conduct, song or otherwise;
- ii. to respect the laws of the host Government;
- iii. to respect the role, status and authority of the Electoral Commission and presiding officers at all times;

- iv. not to communicate with the voters at any time within the precincts of the polling station;
- v. not to interfere in the electoral process at any time; and
- vi. to channel any complaints they may have to the relevant Government and electoral officials.

17. Reform of Electoral Laws

Problem

Some of the electoral laws are cumbersome and bureaucratic. This leads to the difficulties of attainment of good electoral standards and norms within the region.

Recommendation

There is need to harmonize SADC countries electoral laws. This will enhance and promote the attainment of plural politics, democracy, peace and stability in the SADC region.

D. CONCLUSION

The above recommendations on norms and standards in conducting plural and multi-party elections, if adopted and implemented by the SADC Governments, would certainly go a long way to entrenching a democratic culture, in minimising conflict and contributing to political stability and peaceful development in Southern Africa.

SADC Parliamentary Forum should set up a monitoring mechanism to ensure successful implementation of the recommendations.