



STATEMENT
BY
HER EXCELLENCY MRS JULIA DOLLY JOINER
COMMISSIONER FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION
AT
THE CLOSING OF
THE 2nd AFRICAN UNION CONTINENTAL ELECTION
MANAGEMENT BODIES AND ELECTORAL COMMISSIONS
MEETING

13TH June 2012, LUSAKA, ZAMBIA

Madam Justice Irene Mambilima, Chairperson of the Electoral Commission of Zambia

Director Titus Mwewa, representing the Government of the Republic of Zambia

Chairpersons and Members of Electoral Management Bodies and Electoral Commissions from African Union Member States

Representatives of the AU Organs, the RECs and other AU institutions

Representatives of the Partner Community

Permanent Representative of Zambia to the African Union and other senior officials of the Government of the Republic of Zambia

Distinguished Guests

Officials of the African Union Commission,

As we come to the close of this important meeting, I am confident that the past three days have added great value to the deepening of insights on the critical issues that surround a free, fair and credible election and also contributed to our collective knowledge of the opportunities that exist within the African Union in the building of capacity for EMBs towards a more efficient management of the national political process. In my statement at the Opening Ceremony, I outlined the importance of democratic elections in the Continent as a way of minimizing violent conflicts and creating the enabling environment for peace, security and sustainable development in Africa. I also reminded participants about the role you as managers of elections in the Continent, play in guaranteeing the credibility of elections and in creating integrity safeguards of the electoral process. While it is admissible that the task of democracy building is indeed not an easy one, it

is very pleasing to note the commitment, passion and dedication you have continued to show during our interactions. No doubt, it is an indication that the mission ahead and its importance are very clear to you and that you are poised to offer but your best.

One of the most significant outcomes of this meeting has been the exposure to the Democracy and Electoral Assistance Unit's Programme of Electoral Assistance to Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) and the information you now have on accessing these programmes. In our deliberations, it has been established that EMBs in Africa have made significant strides in the area of improving the management and conduct of elections; it is also evident to all that there are indeed challenges ahead and that some of these challenges are not only onerous but require assistance beyond the capacity of the EMBs themselves. This in fact, has been the essence of inviting you here - to exchange ideas and experiences with each other and with the African Union Commission so as to fashion out an enduring relationship among yourselves and between you and the Commission in tackling the issues of electoral management in the Continent through lasting partnerships.

Madam Chairperson

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our interaction with you here during this meeting has been a very worthwhile venture; it has afforded us the opportunity of gaining a practical insight into your experiences in the management and conduct of elections which in turn will serve the purpose of assisting the African Union

Commission in shaping its programme of electoral assistance in line with the actual needs of the election management bodies as have been expressed in the course of this meeting. Like I said earlier, it has also afforded you, the EMBs, the opportunity to exchange amongst yourselves and learn about the experiences of sister institutions. I have no doubt that you have all been further enriched by the wealth of information that has been exchanged here. This is very important for the harmonization of our process of election management in the various countries you represent as it goes without saying that when we achieve unity in our standards and common practices of electoral management, it will become indeed much easier to assess compliance to our collective principles and to move ahead in our vision to achieve a truly democratic environment in the whole Continent.

We in the African Union Commission are taking back all that has been expressed in this meeting in the form of requests, observations including critiques and criticisms, suggestions and recommendations as we pursue the articulation of programmes and processes that will respond adequately to the outcome of this meeting. In my remarks at the Opening Session, I enumerated the efforts we have made since our first meeting in Accra Ghana in 2009, a process which has brought us to this present stage. I am optimistic that when we meet again next year, we shall have even more stories of progress and success in responding to issues and demands that have come out of this 2nd Meeting.

I am very mindful that what we have engaged upon these past three days is a process and not an end in itself. It will be very gratifying that this momentum and energy we have built here be carried forward and

sustained in all future endeavours as we face the new realities that have surfaced here and as we establish the means and process of continuous improvement in the execution of our mandate. I am particularly reassured by the commitment demonstrated by all, which leaves room for no expectation that we will not succeed in our mission. Although the Commission has assumed greater responsibility towards the promotion of and support for democracy and democratic elections in the Continent, may I remind all that the final responsibility for making our collective mission the much desired success rests with you as the actual managers of the various national electoral processes through ensuring that the conduct of elections are carried out in the most professional, dispassionate and credible manner.

Distinguished Participants,

In our human nature and life experiences, one thing that is worse than losing is losing to a perceived biased umpire. Democracy is about the enthronement of the wishes of the majority in an election, but the key to democracy does not lie with the winner, it lies with the loser – how he or she perceives his loss and what action he or she is willing and poised to take about it. The action that a loser will take most certainly will, to a large dimension, depend on his or her perception of the conduct of the contest, and where the perception is a conviction of unfairness or having been robbed, the consequent response could be extreme and even irrational. I therefore urge you in the conduct of your duty to not only ensure the highest level of integrity and impartiality, but also to be seen to do that. We in the African Union Commission are committed to remaining your partners

and one lesson we will certainly carry with us from our experience with you these three days is that our relationship with the African EMBs and Electoral Commissions, has to a large extent and in many respects become closer and strengthened, and our resolve to pursue our common goal has been reinforced.

On a final note, I will like to reiterate the appreciation of the African Union Commission to the Government of the Republic of Zambia for the wonderful hospitality shown to us throughout our stay here. I want to thank once again, the Electoral Commission of Zambia under the leadership of its illustrious Chairperson Justice Mambilima for hosting us and for the courtesies extended to all participants. We are much indebted to our Resource Persons for the able manner in which they steered the deliberations during the sessions. To you, our esteemed Participants, who travelled from far and wide across Africa to be part of this gathering, you have demonstrated your unwavering commitment to the realization of the vision of an Africa that is a beacon of peaceful and stable democracy. Thank you, Merci, Shokran and Obrigada for responding to our invitation despite your very busy schedules. Safe travels back home and Godspeed in your endeavours!

On that note, it is my pleasure to declare this 2nd Meeting of Election Management Bodies and Electoral Commissions officially closed.