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# Preliminary statement for the Secondary Elections by the Eswatini Elections Support Network (EESN |)

## National Secondary Elections-2018

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**Background Information:** The Eswatini Elections Support Network which operates under the auspices of the Coordinating Assembly of NGOs (CANGO) which is a fully operational Network comprising of 10 Non-Governmental Organisations which focus primarily on elections undertook an observer mission for the national primary elections of the Kingdom of Eswatini. The network deployed 120 observers across 59 Tinkhundla areas across all four regions. The Network is also a member of the SADC Elections Network and collaborates with the SADC Council of Non-Governmental Organisations based in Botswana. The view good governance as the critical foundation for development. Good governance entails a government that respects the rule of law, separation of powers between the Executive, Legislature and the Judiciary, respect and protection of human rights, access to Justice, delivery of quality services and facilitate participation of citizens in decision making. The observers deployed were trained so that they become versed with procedures for monitoring/observing election and adhere to ethical guidelines that govern observer missions. The observer mission undertook to observe the national elections if they were in line with Electoral laws of Eswatini which include the following:

- The Elections and Boundaries Commission Act, 2013,
- The Voters Registration Act, 2013 (repeals Voters Registration Order 1992)
- The Elections Act, 2013 (repeals Elections Order 1992)
- The Senate (Elections) Act, 2013,
- The Parliamentary (Petitions) Act, 2013; and
- The Elections Expenses Act, 2013.

For the 2018 elections a total of 120 local observers covered around 245 polling stations during the secondary elections covering all 59 Tinkhundla constituencies. On the secondary elections held on the 21<sup>st</sup> September 2018

What was being observed is as follow: **Time of opening polling stations, the environment outside and inside the polling centre, accessibility to polling stations, orderliness, voting procedures, counting and announcements of results.**

The Network observed that the environment was relatively peaceful in all the polling stations except Hill side polling in the Manzini station where violence took place outside the polling station.

The network would like to present its findings as follows:

- I. **Campaigning:** EBC was able to organise campaigning meetings in all the chiefdoms over a three weeks period. EESN would like to note that the limited period of campaign does not allow for candidates to articulate their issues and proper scrutiny of candidates to be elected into parliament. The unofficial elections campaign with allegations of voter buying was common. The network will continue to advocate for more time allocation to the campaigning period to allow for proper scrutiny of candidates.
- II. **Opening of Polling Stations:** Out of the 245 polling stations we observed, over 213 polling stations opened at 7am.
- III. **Observers:** The network further recognises the presence of SADC, AU, EU diplomatic watch, Human Rights Commission and SADC ECF observer mission who had also deployed observers.
- IV. **Election of women:** The Network notes despite civic education campaigns only two women were elected. The representation of women in decision making structures continues to challenge the country and more resourced need to be allocated to undertake civic education encouraging communities and all critical structures to support women to be appointed in decision making structures.
- V. **Identification material for election officials:** All officials in all 245 polling stations were properly accredited and wearing the right identifiable material that made it easy for identification purposes as indicated the SADC Election guidelines.
- VI. **The environment:** The environment outside the polling station was peaceful except for Ndzingeni during counting and Hillside polling stations where violence was experienced throughout the day and hence, OSSU was called in to retain order. In Hillside, police kept vigilance throughout the day to maintain peace and order. In Ndzingeni polling stations, voters were dispersed using teargas during counting as voters threatened to enter the polling station where counting was taking place.
- VII. **Accessibility to polling stations:** signage to polling stations was not as visible as it was in the primary elections. More than 70 polling stations did not have clear visible signage leading to polling stations.
- VIII. **Accessibility of polling stations:** Accessibility of polling stations to people living with disabilities remains a consistent challenge as they attempt to

exercise their right with the lack of ramps and other amenities that can ease access for people living with disabilities. Only 28 polling stations had the necessary ramps for people living with disabilities.

- IX. **Campaign material:** Only Mjinga High school polling station in Manzini had campaign material for candidates standing for elections near the entrance of the polling station.
- X. **Officials:** Presiding officers remained professional and ensured that the process was as smooth as possible.
- XI. **Verification of voters:** the verification of voters was improved in most polling stations. Processing of a voter took an average of 10 minutes in most polling stations and lines progressed smoothly.
- XII. **Assisted Voters:** They were assisted as provided for by laws by the presiding officer, agents and police present to assist the voter.
- XIII. **Secrecy Forms:** Out of the 120 observers that CANGO deployed, 8 EESN Observers were asked to sign secrecy forms and refused hence not access the inside the polling stations.
- XIV. **Security Presence:** The Royal Eswatini Police Service and in some cases His Majesty's Correctional facilities officials all were seen visible ensuring peace, security and order during elections. The police also played a crucial role in the transportation and protection of ballot material from EBC at Nkanini to polling stations including delivery of more ballot papers where they had run out.
- XV. **Polling Station & Campaigning:** No campaigning was witnessed inside polling stations.
- XVI. **Orderliness of polling stations:** All the polling stations the Network observed were orderly.
- XVII. **Closing of polling stations:** Most voting stopped after 8.00pm and the network noted one polling station in Shiselweni II where voters were allowed to vote after the official closure of the polling station.
- XVIII. **Counting:** Counting was centralised. Counting time varied but the observer mission estimated that counting took 10 HOURS for at least around 150 polling stations. The Network continues to call that Eswatini to adhere to the SADC guidelines and undertake the counting in each polling stations to expedite the counting process. With the exception of Ndzingeni Nazarene primary school polling stations where voters almost interfered with the counting process, no other incidents were recorded. On the overall, counting progressed smoothly in almost all the polling stations observed.
- XIX. **Media reporting:** There was wide coverage by print and electronic media on the election process which allowed the citizens to get updates. However no institution has undertaken an in-depth analysis on why the elected women were less in numbers.
- XX. **Overall impression:** On the overall the Network observed that the elections were largely peaceful and orderly.

By Ms Tjengisile Shabangu

EESN Chairperson