

**SAFEGUARDING ELECTORAL INTEGRITY IN THE
DIGITAL AGE:
STRATEGIES FOR COMBATTING DIGITAL
DISINFORMATION**

AN AFRICAN CONFERENCE

**WELCOME BY
CHAIRPERSON OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION
MR GLEN MASHININI**

**CAPE TOWN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE
2 MARCH 2020**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Thank you Programme Director Commissioner Masuku
- The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs Dr Aaron Motsoaledi
- My fellow Commissioners and colleagues from the Electoral Commission of South Africa:
 - Vice Chairperson Janet Love
 - Judge Dhaya Pillay
 - Dr Nomsa Masuku and
 - Mr Mosotho Moepya

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Adv NotembaTjiepueja, chairperson of the SADC ECF Executive Committee
- Dr Ayodele Odusola, Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme
- Dr Khabele Matlosa, Director of the Department of Political Affairs of the African Union Commission
- Fellow Chairpersons and Commissioners from electoral management bodies throughout the continent

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- The Chief Electoral Officer Mr Sy Mamabolo and the senior leadership of the Electoral Commission
- Honourable leaders and representatives of political parties present here tonight
- Conference speakers, panellists, moderators and rapporteurs

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS CONT

- Members of civil society and religious leaders present
- Members of the media
- Distinguished guests
- Ladies and gentlemen

WELCOME

- On behalf of the Electoral Commission of South Africa it is our great honour to welcome you all here tonight for the official opening of this conference
- We are humbled by the phenomenal response to our invitation to attend this event
- Due to the overwhelming interest in the conference we had to increase attendance from the original 120 envisaged and tonight there are some 200 people with us!

WELCOME CONT

- We are especially honoured to have with us senior representatives of at least 30 African electoral management bodies – including a number of Chairpersons, Commissioners and Chief Electoral Officers
- Given competing priorities, travel concerns over the coronavirus and the challenges of travel within our continent this turnout is exceptional and is testimony to the importance of the topic at hand
- Honourable Minister of Home Affairs Dr Motsoaledi we are honoured by your presence here tonight as a representative of the South African Government
- Thank you for being with us and we look forward to your keynote address this evening to kick-start our conference

WELCOME CONT.

- The Electoral Commission and Home Affairs have enjoyed a long and mutually-respectful relationship which we believe continues to be a model for how electoral management bodies and government can and must cooperate while maintaining independence and impartiality
- On behalf of the Commission we would also like to express our appreciation and gratitude to the United Nations Development Programme for their partnership in bringing this conference to life
- We are also thankful for the support and assistance of the African Union in spreading the word about this conference throughout our continent and helping to ensure widespread participation

IMPORTANCE OF THE CONFERENCE

- Distinguished guests
- Conferences such as this provide a valuable opportunity for us as electoral practitioners, democracy stakeholders and intellectuals to deepen our understanding of the electoral democracy landscape
- They also help us to navigate our institutions through opportunities and challenges using customised solutions to our unique continental experiences
- In the past few years the issue of databases and technology has been very topical in electoral circles

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ELECTIONS

- As the Electoral Commission of South Africa we decided that it is high time that an engagement took place between African election bodies and international experts on the subject to expand our understanding and to help craft African responses to our changing environment
- As institutions mandated with the responsibility to midwife democratic elections, the enormity of that responsibility cannot be overstated
- Each of us has the task to ensure the electoral process is transparent, and the outcome just and peaceful because the major source of conflict remains contested election results

THANK YOU TO THE PRESENTERS

- A glance through the list of presentations planned for the next few days reveals the amazing diversity of topics under the over-arching theme
- On behalf of the Commission we are also indebted to the many subject matter experts who have made themselves available to share their knowledge at this auspicious gathering

AFRICAN ASPIRATIONS

- In undertaking this task we shall be guided by the continental beacon as enshrined in the principles in Agenda 2063: The Africa we want:
 - Where the united African voices paint a picture of what we desire for ourselves, for future generations and the continent
 - And our aspirations that reflect our desire for shared prosperity and well-being, for unity and integration, for a continent of free citizens and expanded horizons, where the full potential of women and youth, boys and girls are realised, and with freedom from fear, disease and want

KEY RELEVANT ASPIRATIONS

- To name a few of the relevant aspirations:
 1. An integrated continent, politically united, and based on Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's renaissance
 2. An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law
 3. A peaceful and secure Africa

CONCLUSION

- Ladies and gentlemen
- This conference is a unique opportunity to make a tangible and meaningful contribution to advancing these ideals on our continent
- Emerging from this conference we must distill clear guidelines and principles for consideration and hopefully adoption by the African Union and regional organisations to safeguard electoral integrity into the future on our continent
- I thank you