



SOUTH AFRICA

27 FEBRUARY 2024

**OPENING REMARKS BY MOSOTH MOEPYA, THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE
ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA AT THE LAUNCH OF THE
“PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA
IN ELECTIONS IN AFRICA”**

Deputy President Paul Mashatile

Chairpersons of Electoral Management Bodies from our Continent

Commissioners from the Electoral Commission of South Africa

The Chief Electoral Officer of Electoral Commission of South

The Deputy Chief Electoral Officers of Electoral Commission of South Africa

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with immense pleasure and a sense of historical significance that I stand before you to welcome each and every one of you to the formal launch of the "Principles and Guidelines for the use of digital and social media in Elections in Africa."

This momentous occasion brings together esteemed dignitaries, including the Deputy President of South Africa, the Chairperson of Electoral Management Bodies, and representatives from the African Union, as we embark on a transformative journey in election management. This special moment also arrives as we celebrate 30 years of electoral democracy. We also meet here today just over three months before we hold our national and provincial elections.

Our gathering today marks a watershed moment in the annals of electoral governance on the African continent. The Association of African Electoral Authorities (AAEA) General Assembly, at its 11th Meeting in Cotonou, Benin, on 03 November 2023, adopted these groundbreaking Principles and Guidelines. This visionary step by the continental EMB body has provided a robust framework for Election Management Bodies (EMBs) to harness the potential of digital and social media in the electoral process.

The Principles and Guidelines before us are not just words on paper; they represent a comprehensive blueprint for EMBs and electoral stakeholders on how best to engage with digital and social media before, during, and after elections. This framework is designed to enhance transparency, inclusivity, and efficiency in the electoral process, aligning with the democratic aspirations of our nations.

To translate these principles into action, the Electoral Commission of South Africa, in collaboration with the AAEA Secretariat, will embark on a continent-wide socialization program. This program will include a series of regional policy dialogue fora, commencing with today's formal launch of the Principles and Guidelines document right here in Johannesburg, South Africa, in February 2024.

Distinguished guests

Beyond the ceremonial launch, this event holds substantial importance. It provides a unique opportunity for EMBs to identify priority principles and guidelines for domestication in preparation for their upcoming elections. This launch program serves as a platform for meaningful dialogue, enabling EMBs to explore ways to adapt and implement these guidelines within the unique contexts of their jurisdictions.

Importantly, this gathering will facilitate interactions with election assistance agencies and partners, fostering collaboration and ensuring that our interventions are

purposeful, based on the identified principles and guidelines. The shared expertise in this room, coupled with the diverse experiences of our electoral stakeholders, will undoubtedly enrich our collective understanding and strengthen our commitment to free, fair, and transparent elections.

In closing, let us seize this moment to embark on a journey of innovation, collaboration, and progress in the realm of election management. Together, let us ensure that the adoption of these Principles and Guidelines propels us towards a future where technology enhances the democratic process, ensuring that the voice of every citizen is heard.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each one of you for gracing this occasion with your presence. May our deliberations today sow the seeds for a future where elections truly reflect the will of the people.

I thank you.