

Citizens Democracy Watch (*Seychelles*)

Please address all correspondence to the Chairperson

PRESS RELEASE

WATCHDOG FOR DEMOCRACY CALLS FOR MEMBERSHIP

Citizens Democracy Watch (*Seychelles*) has been set up by a group of citizens to promote principles of democracy, good governance and fair elections through research, advocacy, civic education community projects and meaningful dialogue. The organization is non-partisan and not associated to any political party. The organization has come into being based on strong local demand for such an orientation, and in consideration of article 24 of the Constitution, which states that citizens can take part in public affairs.

Citizens Democracy Watch (*Seychelles*) will also act as and when needed as a watchdog organization of different human rights institutions, and moreover, conduct election monitoring and voter education. Citizens Democracy Watch (*Seychelles*) aims to decrease the gap between the people and their elected representatives and function as a channel which can create a central forum for the exchange of ideas and methods from a broad range of policy experts, practitioners, and activists involved with work in advancing human rights, good governance, and the rule of law.

Through different activities it will inform people about the meaning and ideas behind democracy, good governance, tolerance and encourage people to practice associated values. It will organize workshop, exhibitions, scholarly debates, discussions and practical policy assessments where local NGOs, schools, other organizations and different Seychellois community can take part.

To accomplish its objectives, Citizens Democracy Watch (*Seychelles*) will partner with diverse alliance of like-minded individuals and organizations locally and across the world to train its members in the promotion of human rights and democratic issues as well as in taking part in observation of the forthcoming parliamentary election. The organisation will also prepare a pool of trained people to observe elections in SADC countries upon request.

The committee which presently is made up of a committee of seven with Steve Lalande as Chairperson and Monica Servina Vice –chair, Jean Claude Matombe as Treasurer and Mrs Eline Moses as Secretary, has been busy setting a strong foundation stone for expanding its membership base and sharpening the tools for communications and mobilization. The association has its own website www.citizensdemocracywatch.org up and running. The NGO will be conducting an orientation workshop for new members and prospective election observers on Saturday 17th September, 2011 from 9am -12noon | LUNGOS Conference Room | Room 209|Orion Mall. The main objectives of the orientation workshop are to introduce members to the NGO and familiarise prospective observers with the **electoral cycle**, electoral laws **and** international standards in election observation methodology

Prospective Election observers will after the orientation complete an intensive three-day training facilitated by the Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa (EISA). This training is aimed at enhancing participants' knowledge of the international standards and best practices in election observation methodology. Once trained , local observers can be considered for election observation within SADC region.

Election observation means observing the entire process of an election from a completely non-partisan and neutral position, to see where and what is happening and whether the election is being conducted from beginning to end, in according with rules and regulations.

Although the Association does not seek to discriminate against anyone applying for membership on the ground of political belief, sex, religion, colour, language place of residence or status, eligibility for election observation will not be automatic. The executive committee is developing a specific set of criteria and guideline for election observers. For example a member will have to undergo specific election observation training before going out on field work and the person will have to abide to the code of conduct set by the Electoral Commission.

As mentioned, election monitoring is not the sole business of the association, a spokesperson for the association said; “we need to think about creating a thriving environment where freedom, equality, economic opportunity and justice are part of the daily vocabulary and lives of all Seychellois citizens”.

“A lot needs to be done, especially when it comes to getting our citizens to engage directly with their representatives in the National Assembly on key issues that impact on peoples lives. There is also a need to address issues to do with democracy and governance in Seychelles from a balanced, analytical and citizens based approach as politicians have the tendency to mostly make their approach from a partisan viewpoint rather than what is best for their constituents” .

Citizens Democracy Watch (*Seychelles*) sees education as the way forward in empowering people, improving their quality of life and increasing their capacity to participate in the decision-making processes which will lead them to actively engage in socially contributing towards nation building. .The members strongly feel that everyone must get this opportunity through Citizens Democracy Watch (Seychelles).

Citizens who feels committed to the principles of democracy, democratic governance and human rights and are willing to become actively involved in the work of the Association can contact 250 1260 or 252 1193 or email info@citizensdemocracywatch.org or citizensdemocracywatch@gmail.com

Membership are open to persons aged 16years and above.

Dated this 12th September,2011