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## Election

**Observers find legislative election 'free and fair' - 04.10.2011**

**Southern African Development Community and Seychellois election observers have released their initial reports saying the September 29- October 1 National Assembly polls were "free and fair".**



However, both the SADC and Citizens Democracy Watch Seychelles (CDWS) reports make recommendations for improvements in areas they found to raise concern among those involved in the election.

First to present their report were the SADC observer mission, which was read on Sunday by mission head Rosemary Mashaba, before members of the Electoral Commission, of the diplomatic corps and of the CDWS as well as representatives of candidates.



**Members of the SADC observer team presenting their initial report**



"The electoral process and procedures were credible and transparent," said Ms Mashaba, noting there were areas of concern, however.

"Of importance to the mission is the opportunity and ability provided by the authorities to enable the people of Seychelles take part in the selection of their National Assembly representatives," she said.

"To this end, the SADC electoral observer mission is pleased to note the democratic right to vote for the people of Seychelles has been respected and accorded, in line with the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections."

She said her mission wished to encourage all "political stakeholders" in the country to come together and work towards resolving their differences so as to ensure continued political stability and good governance in the interest of the people of Seychelles.

Ms Mashaba said the SADC observers have noted their May 2011 recommendations are being taken on board and the process of electoral reforms has begun.

As examples of steps forward, she cited the inclusion and encouragement of local observers to be involved and that a National Electoral Commission is now running elections instead of an electoral commissioner, as they recommended in May.

They said Seychellois conducted themselves well during the September 29, 30 and October 1 election, saying it was peaceful, free and transparent, and praised the commission for its high state of logistical preparedness and making it possible and easy for everybody to vote, including people with disabilities and the elderly.

They noted special measures were taken against double voting, adding the cooling off period helped to ease political tensions.

Among the new recommendations they have made include the need to speed up ongoing electoral reforms.

"The Media Commission should be strengthened and its mandate widened especially with a view to making state media more accessible to all political parties," says their report, which asks for translucent ballot boxes, saying they would make the process even more transparent.

Voting should take place on the same day with results being displayed at the polling stations immediately after

Seychelles time  
14:16 GMT+4  
Date : 07.10.2011  
Mahé, Indian Ocean  
4°35 S, 55°40 E



## WEATHER FORECAST

## FOCUS



**Speech of President James A. Michel on National Day June 18, 2011**

Speech of President James A. Michel on National Day June 18, 2011

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**State-of-the-nation address by President James A. Michel before the National Assembly on February 25**

State-of-the-nation address by President James A. Michel before the National Assembly on February 25, 2011

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**Budget address 2011 by Vice-President, Minister for Finance Danny Faure, December 7, 2010**

Budget address 2011 by Vice-President, Minister for Finance Danny Faure, December 7, 2010

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counting, which the observers said would enhance transparency.

Chief observer of the CDWS, Steve Lalande, said the local observers talked to political party leaders, independent candidate Jacqueline Hoareau, the police, non-governmental organisations and ordinary citizens on the street.

"All parties favoured a comprehensive and early review of the electoral laws and regulations that drive the electoral process. Political parties expressed an aspiration for a new era in the way politics is conducted across the islands," said the report he read yesterday before diplomats, SADC observers, representatives of candidates and members of the Electoral Commission.

He said stakeholders were concerned about "the sudden dissolution of the National Assembly, use of state funds and resources during the elections period, intimidation of candidates, activists and supporters, media coverage of events during cooling off period and non-adherence to agreed rules and procedures during campaigning".

The CDWS also named unavailability of some parties' manifestos, inappropriate behaviour of political parties and activists on polling day and "difficulties to access campaign resources for independent candidates".

"It was not clear how far people helping voters can go, for example, how many times can they come to bring voters to the station and whether they can help them mark on the ballot papers," he told Nation, explaining a clause in the report saying there is ambiguity.

"At the moment these things are done on the basis of a gentleman's agreement, but it should not be so, the law should specify the 'do's and 'don't's," he said.

All candidates had access to state media, he said, but the role of the media also remains high among stakeholders' concerns," said Mr Lalande.

"The CDWS did not limit itself to observing at the polling stations but also responded to requests to be on the field, within the districts, observing the behaviour of people travelling to and from the polling stations as well as the behaviour of people during the election period.

"A hotline was advertised in the Seychelles Nation newspaper and the CDWS responded to several telephone calls from the public concerning activities happening in the districts.

"Although we located some suspicious looking groupings, our investigations did not reveal breaches of electoral laws," he said, noting the organisation is investigating allegations and not just going by what people say.

"We believe being on the field may have contributed in some ways towards encouraging good faith on the part of the parties and also acted as a deterrent towards irregular practices.

"Overall the electoral process was well managed, and in our opinion met regional and international standards," he said.

Among other concerns were the positioning of the polling booths coupled with the manner in which the ballot papers were folded, making it possible for an onlooker to know who one voted for.

"There is also the possibility of seeing through the thickness of the (ballot) paper by keen stationary observers, risking secrecy," he said, promising a more detailed report within 30 days.

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