

MALAWI ELECTION SUPPORT NETWORK (MESN)

SECOND INTERIM STATEMENT ON THE 2009 MALAWI PARLIAMENTARY AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

22 May 2009, COMESA Hall, Blantyre

INTRODUCTION

Malawi Election Support Network (MESN) is a coalition of 75 civil society organisations dedicated to ensuring that national elections are held in a credible and transparent manner. The network was formed in 2003, to harmonise and coordinate civil society's role in the electoral process, such as joint planning, implementation, and standardisation of materials. In the run up to the 2009 Elections, with the objective of promoting free, fair and credible elections, MESN and its member organisations undertook various activities in support of the electoral process, including civic and voter education and monitoring the pre-election period.

The following is MESN's second interim statement on the election process. This statement concerns analysis of presidential election results. MESN's first interim statement was released on 20 May 2009. It concerned the voting and counting processes up to that point.

On the polling day, MESN deployed 1,479 monitoring personnel in its overall monitoring effort. This included a core of 800 well-trained monitors deployed to a random statistical sample of polling streams throughout the country. These monitors observed the opening of the polls, as well as the voting and counting processes, concentrating on key elements of the processes. They used a common form to ensure statistical reliability of their observations. They also recorded and reported the presidential results from those polling streams. The monitors were supported by 193 constituency supervisors. MESN also deployed 386 other monitors to the constituency level and 100 mobile monitors. MESN's findings are therefore based on a systematic election-day observation process.

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS

As noted in our first interim statement, the Election Day was peaceful, and Malawi's voters turned out in great numbers to exercise their right to vote. Across Malawi, MESN monitors reported that 98% of polling streams had no or only minor problems throughout the voting process. While the counting process was very slow and in many places lasted late into the night, MESN's monitors did not report any problems that challenged the credibility of the counting process. More than 99% of MESN's monitors agreed with the count at their respective polling stream, and 99% of the party monitors signed the results forms for their polling station.

Based on the analysis of monitors' reports from 99% of the nationally representative statistical sample of polling streams, the presidential election results show that Bingu Wa Mutharika (DPP) received approximately 66% of the votes and John Tembo (MCP) received approximately 31% of the vote, with a +/- 2% margin of error for each candidate. This analysis is consistent with the EC's official results.

MESN plans to provide an analysis of results for all candidates in its final report. MESN notes that the EC experienced difficulties in the results tabulation process and that the process was modified to increase the speed of tabulation. The EC chose to announce results before the tabulation process was completed. However, the EC had more than 90% of results tabulated at the time of the announcement. As noted in MESN's first interim report, there were significant problems in the pre-election environment, which in several important respects fell short of the minimum conditions outlined in the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections. It must be emphasized that many of these problems also occurred in the 1999 and 2004 elections, as observed by MESN and the Church-NGO Consortium and Public Affairs Committee (PAC) before it. It is therefore critical to prevent them from becoming entrenched negative practises in the electoral process. These and other matters concerning the overall election process will be addressed in MESN's final report.

MESN again wishes to applaud Malawians for the expression of their patriotism in this election and their evident desire to entrench democratic values. MESN commends the EC's efforts to properly conduct the elections, and expresses its appreciation to the EC staff for their extraordinary cooperation with MESN's monitoring efforts. MESN also appreciates the support of the regional and international community for the election process and MESN's efforts.

Signed: _____
Aloisious A.C Nthenda, Chairperson

Steve Duwa – Publicity Secretary

For further information contact :

Aloisious A.C Nthenda, Chairperson – MESN Board Chariperson - Cell: +265 8 828 262
Steve Duwa – Publicity Secretary - +265 8 88644813

Malawi Election Support Network

Box 32160, Chichiri, BLANTYRE 3
Tel: +265 1 842 843 or Email: mesnsecretariate@gmail.com