



NamNet Statement: Concerns regarding the November 2024 Elections

Windhoek, Namibia – Thursday, 12 Dec. 2024

We, the Namibian Civil Society Non-State Actors Network (NamNet) comprising umbrella bodies that represent over 1,150 organisations, express our deepest appreciation for the patience and camaraderie that the Namibian citizens have exhibited during the sadly shambolic period of voting. In the aftermath of voting, we call upon everyone to demonstrate high levels of maturity and commitment to Namibia in order to maintain peace and stability while constructively engaging to demand full accountability by all major role-players as one of the fundamental principles of our democracy.

Serious electoral irregularities were observed and documented that are a cause of great concern to our fundamental human rights and freedoms as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia and the democratic future of our country. These irregularities started two to three months ago with the cancelling of the open public tender process for the printing of ballots without giving convincing reasons, and the appointment of a particular company without providing a valid rationale for this company being selected.

During the elections itself, the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) has demonstrated a lack of transparency, avoided communicating with the public at multiple levels, held unilateral meetings - seemingly in secret - with one of the political parties, an action which is, at best, highly insensitive as it created the public impression of being partisan, which is inconsistent with the spirit of the Electoral Act as amended, poor planning and clear incompetence. This has created the feeling that the ECN has little respect for the voting public with people standing in queues for up to 14 hours, while some were denied their constitutional right to vote at all. The additional two days for voting were established on a shaky legal basis and were only allowed for in some regions according to criteria not made known to the public. The Khomas Region with the largest voting public had only one polling station open while other regions had many polling stations. The extent and pattern of the mismanagement suggest that the issue extends beyond simple incompetence and dismal leadership, and possibly involves deliberate manipulation and selected voter disenfranchisement.

All of this and the ECN's failure to take responsibility and accountability, something the President of the Republic of Namibia failed to call out by saying that 'the ECN should not be blamed' raises suspicions and compromises trust in not only this election, but also in our institutions, democracy, and our current system of governance in general. It also damages the image and reputation of the country both nationally and internationally.

The Namibian Civil Society Non-State Actor Network (NamNet) calls out the ECN's failure to hold democratic, free, fair, transparent and credible elections, and places direct responsibility on the ECN for the rising political tensions in Namibia. This needs to be addressed as a matter of utmost urgency in a proactive and constructive manner to prevent further escalation and defuse these tensions. Because of the chaotic way in which the recent elections were conducted, the results that have now been announced are overshadowed by serious concerns, which dampens the joy over Namibia's first and Africa's second female president.

We recommend that the following steps be taken, based on the Namibian Constitution and guided by relevant legislative frameworks:

Addressing the Current Situation:

- ✓ The Electoral Commission to take responsibility and resign or to be removed from office by the President, to ensure a fresh and unbiased approach to ensure that trust in the institution itself is re-established.
- ✓ A Commission of Enquiry - consisting of multiple stakeholders with representatives from academia, civil society and political parties - be established to investigate what exactly happened before, during, and immediately after the elections on the 27th, 29th and 30th November 2024 and make recommendations, so that lessons could be learned to assure credible, free and fair elections through neutral, reliable, competent and transparent institutions and processes.

As umbrella bodies of Namibian Civil Society, we seek to re-establish trust in our democracy, politically re-empower our citizens, and ensure reliable governance of Namibia through due process, adherence to the Constitution and the rule of law, so that we elect political leaders that truly represent the will of our citizens.

In addition to the above-mentioned immediate remedies, the following long-term recommendations are being suggested, while more comprehensive proposals will come out of the suggested Commission of Enquiry.

Possible Long-term Recommendations:

- These recent elections have demonstrated the importance to have, and be seen to have, a neutral and independent ECN with no ties to any political party. Therefore, we call for the appointment of a Commission by the judiciary, drawing on retired high court judges and individuals of outstanding integrity, to oversee the appointment of senior personnel to the ECN and their work.
- We further call for the ECN to develop a detailed plan of work at least 12 months before each election, tabled before the Commissioners, a representative of each registered political party, and up to five representatives of civil society (to be selected by civil society) that sets out the fine details of each and every component, from voter registration through to announcing the election results.

Contact: NamNet Chairperson: Mr. Mahongora Kavihuha
Email: tucnafederation@gmail.com Cell: 081-1271059