

# Mozambique News Agency

## AIM Reports

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## Long queues as voting begins

Across the country, long queues have been reported as Mozambicans went to the polls on Wednesday to cast their ballots in the country's fifth presidential and parliamentary elections since the end of the one-party state in 1990.

The polling stations were due to open at 07.00. The Electoral Administration Technical Secretariat (STAE) told polling station staff to arrive two hours early, at 05.00, in order to make all the necessary preparations to receive voters.

Nonetheless, in the central city of Beira some of the polling stations were late opening. Thus, the polling station at the Palmeiras Primary School, where the mayor of Beira, and presidential candidate of the opposition Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM) is due to vote, had not opened its doors to the voters by 07.35.

At this time, staff members were still putting up the banners identifying the school as a polling centre, and the posters listing the candidates.

Despite the delays, and the large crowds, the atmosphere outside the polling stations was calm. Police were present to keep order, but at a distance, as established by the electoral legislation.

Sofala province has 926,746 registered voters, who should cast their ballots in 1,267 polling stations, 358 of which are in Beira.

### Renamo calls for strict application of election law

The largest opposition party, Renamo, has called for the correct application of the country's electoral law, as approved by the Mozambican parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, on 26 February.

Speaking at a Maputo press conference on Tuesday, Renamo spokesperson Antonio Muchanga, said the electoral law should be followed to the letter, particularly in the location of the polling stations and the presence of the police.

The law states that the polling stations should, wherever possible, be in exactly the same place as the

voter registration posts, so that registered voters know where they should go. Polling stations may only be set up at the places indicated by the National Elections Commission (CNE). Any polling station set up outside of those places is illegal, and any votes cast there would be null and void.

The law also states that the police on duty on polling day should keep their distance. They should be stationed 300 metres from the polling stations. Muchanga stressed that the police should only enter the stations if requested to do by the polling station staff (in order to quell any disturbances, for instance).

Muchanga added that, even if the police are called upon to intervene, they should "assess what equipment they mean to use". In the 2013 municipal elections, the police were heavily criticized for the use of force, including tear gas, to deal with crowds, notably in the central city of Quelimane.

Muchanga warned that under no circumstances should the police be involved in managing the elections, since that is exclusively the task of the electoral bodies envisaged in the law.

Muchanga guaranteed that Renamo would have polling station monitors in all stations in Maputo city and province. It has also appointed staff members (MMVs) for all the stations, but lamented the slowness in their accreditation.

Each polling station should have seven MMVs. Four of these – the chairperson, the deputy chairperson, the secretary and one of the four tellers – are recruited through a public tender organised by the Electoral Administration Technical Secretariat (STAE). The other three tellers are appointed by the parties represented in parliament - the ruling Frelimo Party, Renamo and the Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM).

## Basic data on elections

Almost 11 million Mozambicans are entitled to vote in Wednesday's general elections.

The final result from the voter registration was that 10,963,148 citizens were issued with voter cards. The voter registration took place in two phases – last year, for the 53 municipalities, ahead of the November municipal elections, and this year, between February and May, for the entire country.

The vast majority of the voters – 10,874,328 – were registered in the 11 provincial constituencies, which elect 248 members of the Mozambican parliament, the Assembly of the Republic. The remaining 88,820 voters were registered in Mozambican communities in the diaspora. They elect two members of parliament. All the voters, in the country and abroad, participate in the election of the President of the Republic.

Broken down by constituency, the electorate is as follows:

Niassa – 615,065 (14 parliamentary seats)  
 Cabo Delgado – 964,071 (22 seats)  
 Nampula – 2,079,129 (47 seats)  
 Zambezia – 1,948,859 (45 seats)  
 Tete – 971,644 (22 seats)  
 Manica – 712,938 (16 seats)  
 Sofala – 926,746 (21 seats)  
 Inhambane – 598,276 (14 seats)  
 Gaza – 591,194 (14 seats)  
 Maputo province – 757,594 (17 seats)  
 Maputo city – 708,812 (16 seats)  
 Africa – 86,985 (one seat)  
 Rest of the world – 1,835 (one seat)

The Africa constituency covers Mozambicans resident in seven countries – South Africa, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania and Kenya. The “rest of the world” is a misnomer, since this constituency covers Mozambicans living in just two European countries, Portugal and Germany.

The Electoral Administration Technical Secretariat (STAE) is setting up 17,010 polling stations inside the country and 191 in the diaspora.

Also on Wednesday, the voters are electing provincial assemblies. Every province except Maputo City has a provincial assembly. Such a body is not required in the capital since it would simply duplicate the work of the existing Maputo Municipal Assembly.

The provincial assemblies vary in size from 70 members in Gaza and Inhambane to 93 in Nampula. In all there are 811 seats in the ten provincial assemblies.

## President Guebuza and Nyusi cast their votes

President Armando Guebuza was the first citizen to vote on Wednesday at a polling station set up at the Josina Machel Secondary School in central Maputo.

President Guebuza and the First Lady, Maria da Luz Guebuza, arrived as the polling station opened.

After voting in the country's fifth multi-party presidential and parliamentary elections, Guebuza told reporters “now I am very happy for this moment and at exercising my right”. He said that Mozambicans should do all in their power to transform the elections “into a genuinely festive occasion”.

He urged the almost 11 million registered voters in the country to come en masse to the 17,010 polling stations, and make use of their constitutionally guaranteed right to vote.

An hour later, at a polling station in the Polana Secondary School, Frelimo presidential candidate, Filipe Nyusi, told reporters, after casting his vote, that he was confident of his impending victory

“Yes, naturally we're going to win”, he told reporters. “I think we worked well and the results are positive”.

“I feel proud and very pleased”, he added. “I voted for the future of my country. This is a moment of great pride and joy for me, to know that from this decision I will be able to lead the country”.

He too urged the voters to continue to arrive en masse at the polling stations. “I hope the voting continues in this way, in tranquillity and order, and without violence, because this is what legitimizes the Mozambican nation”, he added.

## Afonso Dhlakama calls for peaceful elections

Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama on Wednesday appealed for peaceful elections immediately after casting his own vote at a polling station in the Polana Secondary School, in central Maputo.

“I am appealing for non-violence during the voting, because emotions are running high, particularly among young people”, he told reporters.

He added his voice to those of government and police officials who have urged that after voting citizens should go about their normal business rather than hang around the polling stations. People who were eager to know the results could wait beyond the boundaries of the stations or at home – but they should not mix with the queues of people waiting to vote.

Asked whether he would accept the results of the elections, Dhlakama refused to give a straight answer – but he said he was confident that “for the first time” the country would have free, fair and transparent elections,

He dismissed all previous Mozambican elections as “puppet shows”, even though were given a generally clean bill of health by local and foreign observer teams. Indeed, Mozambique's first multi-party elections, held in 1994, were described as “the best elections ever held in Africa”, by the then head of the UN mission in the country, Aldo Ajello.

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*This is a condensed version of the AIM daily news service – for details contact pfauvet@live.com*