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Constitutional Council validates election results

The Constitutional Council, Mozambique's highest body in matters of constitutional and electoral law, on 30 December validated the results of the 15 October general elections, declaring the candidate of the ruling Frelimo Party, former defence minister Filipe Nyusi, as president elect, with 57 per cent of the vote.

The Council declared that Frelimo had also won the parliamentary election and will have an overall majority of 38 in the new parliament – much less than the overall majority of 132 which it enjoys in the outgoing parliament.

In both elections, the runner-up was Renamo. Its leader Afonso Dhlakama took 36.6 per cent of the presidential vote, while Renamo won slightly under a third of the parliamentary vote, securing 89 seats.

The third largest party, the Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM), took 8.40 per cent of the parliamentary vote with Daviz Simango receiving 6.40 per cent.

The remaining 2.97 per cent of the parliamentary vote was scattered around 27 minor parties.

Unlike all its other decisions this year, the Council was divided on whether to validate the results. Six of the seven judges were in favour, and declared that “in general” the elections took place in line with the established legal framework. But the seventh, Manuel Franque, appointed to the Council by the Renamo parliamentary group, disagreed.

In his dissenting opinion Franque declared that, in a state ruled by law, if there is to be total transparency in elections, and if the results are to express the real will of the electorate, it was important that “no irregularities remain to be corrected, and no illicit acts remain unpunished”.

Franque argued that the way the National Elections Commission (CNE) had handled the elections, particularly the count and tabulation, “raises doubt about the veracity of the results, since so many irregularities have been neither corrected nor explained”.

This included missing or unprocessed polling station results sheets.

According to STAE, over 98 per cent of results sheets were processed. The worst problem of unprocessed sheets was in Tete province where Renamo mobs sabotaged 44 polling stations in Tsangano district and 26 in the neighbouring district of Macanga, in some cases setting them ablaze.

Franque also referred to reports that ballot papers marked in advance had been discovered “and neither the CNE nor any other authority has thought it worth explaining this phenomenon and its impact on the election results”.

Although Franque did not call for annulling the elections, he said that they had been “neither fair nor transparent”.

Elections “partially free and fair, and not very transparent”

The final report from the Electoral Observatory, the coalition of religious bodies and NGOs which is Mozambique's largest and most credible group of election observers shows that the results of the Observatory's parallel count of the votes from the elections are broadly in line with the official results announced by the National Elections Commission (CNE).

Nonetheless, the Observatory concluded that the elections were only “partly free and fair, and not very transparent”.

The close fit between the Observatory's parallel count and the official results gives added confidence that the results announced by the CNE are broadly correct.

The Electoral Observatory report concluded “these elections were stained by irregularities, some of which could have been prevented. They also showed that the politicization of the CNE and STAE in no way helped conduct the elections with impartiality. On the contrary, it created more division in public opinion”.

The Observatory was referring to the changes in the electoral law imposed by Renamo in February 2013. As part of the price for ending its military campaign, which had claimed dozens of lives, particularly in the central province of Sofala, Renamo demanded sweeping changes in the electoral legislation.

First the government in its dialogue with Renamo, and then the Frelimo parliamentary group conceded these changes.

This meant that literally thousands of political appointees (from Frelimo, and Renamo and the MDM) were added to the various electoral commissions and to branches of STAE at all levels. The three political parties were even given the right to appoint a member of staff at all polling stations.

The Observatory thus recommended the establishment of “a more independent, transparent and professional electoral administration”. It believed that, with 20 years of electoral experience, Mozambique should be capable of “clearing up the level of irregularities shown”.

The disturbances that occurred affected the freedom of citizens and even endangered them physically. The integrity of the elections was also undermined by the number of registered voters who were turned away.

Renamo threatens to boycott new parliament

Renamo has threatened to boycott the new Assembly of the Republic, the Mozambican parliament, emerging from the general elections of 15 October.

The National Elections Commission (CNE) has announced that the deputies of the Assembly of the Republic will be sworn into office on 12 January. The 10 provincial assemblies, also elected on 15 October, will take office on 7 January.

Antonio Muchanga, the spokesperson for Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama, told AIM that the Renamo deputies will not take their seats, either in parliament or in the provincial assemblies.

“No-one will take their seats”, he declared. He said this decision had been taken by the Renamo National Political Commission. It flows from Renamo’s rejection of the election results which it describes as fraudulent.

But it seems that the deputies from the second opposition force, the Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM) will take their seats. Lutero Simango, head of the MDM parliamentary group in the outgoing parliament, told AIM “We are in favour of inclusion. We have never excluded ourselves”.

He said the MDM was disappointed at the ruling by the Constitutional Council which validated the election results. Simango believed the Council could and should have taken a different position. However, he recognised that there is no appeal against Council rulings, “and so we have to accept it”.

A parliamentary boycott would have serious consequences for Renamo. If the deputies do not take the oath of office they will not receive their substantial parliamentary salaries (and Renamo will not receive the state subsidy paid to parties with parliamentary representation). Furthermore, under the parliamentary standing orders, any deputies who do not take their seats within thirty days of the opening session automatically lose them.

As for the ten provincial assemblies, Frelimo enjoys a majority in five (Niassa, Cabo Delgado, Inhambane, Gaza and Maputo), and Renamo dominates three (Zambezia, Sofala and Tete). In the Nampula assembly, Frelimo and Renamo are tied on 46 seats each, which puts an unusual amount of power in the hands of the lone MDM member of that Assembly. In the Manica assembly, Frelimo has a one seat advantage over Renamo but that could disappear if another lone MDM member decides to vote with Renamo.

In detail, the composition of the ten provincial assemblies is as follows:

Niassa:	Frelimo 42	Renamo 34	MDM 4
Cabo Delgado:	Frelimo 67	Renamo 14	MDM 1
Nampula:	Frelimo 46	Renamo 46	MDM 1
Zambezia:	Renamo 51	Frelimo 37	MDM 4
Tete:	Renamo 42	Frelimo 37	MDM 3
Manica:	Frelimo 40	Renamo 39	MDM 1
Sofala:	Renamo 45	Frelimo 30	MDM 7
Inhambane	Frelimo 58	Renamo 11	MDM 1
Gaza:	Frelimo 69	Renamo 0	MDM 1
Maputo:	Frelimo 59	Renamo 12	MDM 4

Nationally, of the 811 seats in the provincial assemblies, Frelimo won 485 (59.8 per cent), Renamo 294 (36.3 per cent), and the MDM 32 (3.9 per cent).

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

Mozambicans “heroes of their own liberation from poverty”

President Armando Guebuza, in his New Year’s message to the nation, has urged all Mozambicans to continue the struggle for the consolidation of national unity, self-esteem and peace in 2015.

This struggle, he added, should be based on the conviction that Mozambicans will be the heroes of their own liberation from poverty, and with their talents and their skills will build the well-being and prosperity of the Mozambican nation.

This was President Guebuza’s last New Year’s message as head of state, and so he declared that, in the year now beginning, the national agenda will be led by the winner of the 15 October presidential election, Filipe Nyusi, “to whom we should give our full support”.

President Guebuza said that the October elections had been “an important landmark in the consolidation of multiparty democracy and in exploring the mechanisms for the participation of citizens in the enjoyment of their constitutional rights”.

He added that the fraternal environment of the New Year festivities should also provide an occasion for reflecting on the achievements of each citizen in 2014, whether in improving his or her individual living conditions, or in implementing the national struggle against poverty.

President Guebuza believed that over the past year the country had continued to consolidate a sense of self-esteem and of Mozambican identity, as well as the promotion of peace and reconciliation

The President thanked Mozambique’s international cooperation partners for their encouragement and multifaceted support for the country’s development agenda, and for their respect for Mozambican sovereignty.

Looking back over his entire ten years in office, President Guebuza thanked all citizens for the support they had given him in the battle against poverty and for the welfare of the country.

Tax target surpassed

The Mozambican Tax Authority (AT) surpassed its tax collection targets for 2014, according to its chairperson, Rosario Fernandes.

The tax collection target for 2014 was 147.3 billion meticaís (about US\$4.68 billion). But at an AT meeting summarizing the year, Fernandes announced that, between 1 January and midday on 30 December, the AT had collected, and transferred to the government’s Single Treasury Account (CUT) slightly more than 153.4 billion meticaís.

Increased fiscal revenues mean a gradual decline in Mozambique’s dependence on foreign aid. Twenty years ago foreign aid covered around 60 per cent of public expenditure, a figure which has now declined to just over 30 per cent.

The AT also surpassed the tax collection target in 2013 – then the plan was to collect 114 billion meticaís in taxes, but the final figure was 124 billion.

Fernandes told the meeting that the target for 2015 is to collect 180 billion meticaís in taxes. To reach this the AT would prioritise an expansion of the tax base. This would be achieved by increased registration of taxpayers (thus bringing more of the informal sector within the tax net), decentralizing tax offices, and stepping up the fight against tax evasion.

The AT also wants to increase the involvement of banks in tax collection. Currently taxpayers can use 11 out of the 20 registered commercial banks to pay their taxes, rather than going in person to the tax offices.

Police refuse to comment on kidnapping

The Mozambican police on 23 December declined to give any further information on the hunt for the kidnappers of Momad Bachir Suleimane, reputedly one of the richest men in the country, who was rescued from captivity on 2 December.

Asked about the case at his regular press briefing, the spokesperson for the General Command of the police, Pedro Cossa, said that until the case is completely cleared up the police would continue to hunt for clues. In the meantime, there would be no comment.

The police story is that Bachir, after 38 days in captivity, was rescued in the town of Macia in the southern province of Gaza. The rescue operation was supposedly carefully planned – which makes it surprising that the police were unable to arrest any of the kidnappers.

The kidnappers are said to have dumped Bachir in Macia once they realized that the police were on their trail. Thirty heavily armed policemen were involved – yet somehow they let the kidnap gang slip through their fingers.

The three detainees whom the police presented to reporters on were not arrested in Macia but in Bobole, in Maputo province, and in Machava, on the outskirts of Maputo city. They were supposedly among the men who guarded the hideouts where Bachir was kept.

Bachir told reporters that his captors were Zimbabweans and South Africans, yet the three men arrested are all Mozambicans.

Among the other oddities in the case are that Bachir says he was mistreated and half starved. He claimed that he was in such despair that he contemplated suicide and attempted, without success, to slash his wrists. Yet within hours of his release, he was talking freely with journalists, with no visible signs of trauma, quite unlike earlier kidnap victims.

Bachir told reporters that he employs no bodyguards – which contradicts a statement made by Deputy Interior Minister Jose Mandra shortly after the kidnapping that Bachir was unprotected because he had given his bodyguards the day off.

At the time, Mandra, cited by the independent television station STV, said "We know that Mr Bachir had personal security and on that day, from the information I have, he gave them time off. Why did he do that and precisely on that day? This is an aspect we have to take into account".

EMATUM purchases American fishing gear

An American company, Hi-Liner Fishing Gear and Tackle Inc, of Green Cove Springs, Florida, has signed a contract to supply equipment to the fleet of fishing vessels of EMATUM (Mozambique Tuna Company).

According to reports in the Florida press, the company is providing monofilament line, hooks and other gear to develop Mozambique's long line tuna fishing industry.

Under the agreement Hi-Liner is also sending experienced American fishing captains to advise EMATUM.

One of these advisers, Mike Carney, who has been in Maputo for about a month, cited in the electronic version of the "Florida Times Union", said "we've always been encouraged to spread American technology. But if you don't bring the captain with it, it almost always fails".

He added "we're showing them how to make the vessels viable, even though they don't know how to use them. It's been tough. It was very hard getting the first boat away from the dock. It was very hard producing the first fish because they're expecting me to do what we do with catching fish, but

I'm teaching these people from start to finish. I had only two people on the boat who had ever been to sea before. I have a 15-man crew, and I had to teach them everything".

Carney said he had to teach the crew how to bait the long lines used to catch the tuna, and how to clean the caught fish.

EMATUM was set up in 2013, and became controversial because it raised US\$850 million on the European bond market in order to acquire its equipment, notably 30 vessels purchased from a shipyard in the French city of Cherbourg. These are six patrol boats, and 30 fishing ships, a mix of trawlers and longliners.

The Mozambican government has guaranteed the debt to the bondholders, but is confident that EMATUM will be a profitable venture, and will not default on payments.

It points out that, until the creation of EMATUM, almost all tuna fishing in Mozambican waters was done by foreign vessels. About 200 foreign vessels were licensed to fish for tuna. According to Transport Minister Gabriel Muthisse (who is a former deputy fishing minister), the foreign companies were not even obliged to put into Mozambican ports to pick up their licences. These were normally faxed to their countries of origin.

Writing on his Facebook page, Muthisse said that, gradually, any company wishing to fish for tuna in Mozambican waters will have to base its vessels in Mozambican ports. "They will have to hire their crew in Mozambique", he wrote. "They will have to pay taxes in Mozambique. They will have to unload and process the fisheries produce and the by-catch in Mozambique, thus influencing the national accounts".

Muthisse argued that "all this will have a tremendous effect on the economy, on employment, on taxes, and on controlling catch levels". He believed that EMATUM was playing the role of a catalyst in these changes, which would damage those "powerful interests" which had become used "to doing whatever they like in our waters".

So far there has been only one EMATUM fishing expedition, and the boat concerned returned with a catch largely of tuna and swordfish. Some of the catch is being given away to orphanages and other charitable institutions for the festive season. The next EMATUM fishing trip is scheduled for January.

National Blood Centre inaugurated

Prime Minister Alberto Vaquina on 22 December urged young Mozambicans to become blood donors since blood remains a "unique and irreplaceable medicine" which can only be obtained from human beings.

Vaquina was speaking at the inauguration of the National Blood Reference Centre, set up in Mavalane General Hospital in Maputo,

"Giving blood is an act of great generosity and solidarity", he declared. "Blood donors deserve our full support for the extraordinary contribution they make to the survival of other human beings".

The Centre and its equipment were financed by the United States government. US\$4.2 million were provided from PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) and the total American support for Mozambique's blood transfusion programme has now reached US\$13 million. Currently, the US is the only donor supporting this programme.

Despite the great increase in blood donations over the past decade, the Mozambican health service is still seriously short of blood. Currently only half the blood needed is being donated.

Deadline extended for hydrocarbon licencing

The Mozambican government has extended the deadline for submitting bids for the fifth hydrocarbon licensing round, which was launched in Maputo and London on 23 October.

Initially, the deadline for submitting bids was 20 January, but a government statement extends the deadline to 30 April.

Fifteen blocks are on offer in this tender, and they cover a total area of 76,800 square kilometres. Three of the blocks in the new tender are in the Rovuma Basin, where the American company Anadarko and ENI of Italy have discovered huge reserves (about 200 trillion cubic feet so far) of natural gas off the coast of the northern province of Cabo Delgado.

The remaining 12 blocks are in the Mozambique Basin, eight offshore and four onshore. The Mozambique Basin covers an area of half a million square kilometres, stretching from the Zambezi Delta to the border with South Africa.

Nine deaths in torrential rain

At least nine people died on 28 December when torrential rains struck the northern city of Nacala.

The storm also swept away over 60 houses and severely damaged roads in the city. The nine deaths were caused by lightning strikes, and by the collapse of a warehouse wall on top of adjacent houses.

The collapse caused the deaths of five people from the same household. There were two survivors who are receiving medical care at the local health centre.

CNE confirms Cuamba by-election result

Abdul Carimo, chairperson of the National Elections commission (CNE), on 26 December confirmed the victory of Frelimo's candidate Zacarias Filipe in the mayoral by-election in the municipality of Cuamba held on 17 December.

The turnout was 24.83 percent of the 44,055 registered voters. Zacarias Filipe received 57.83 per cent of the vote. In second place was MDM's Tito Crimildo who received 26.72 per cent of the vote. Renamo's Leovilgildo Buanancasso trailed with 15.46 per cent of the vote.

ADB grant to budget

The African Development Bank (ADB) has provided a grant of US\$29.5 million as general support for the Mozambican state budget, according to a note from the Ministry of Finance, received by AIM on 23 December.

This is the first of three annual budget support operations, promised by the ADB for the 2014-2016 period. The total sum will be US\$59 million.

It is expected that this sum will contribute to strengthening the institutional capacity of the government, including supporting the policy reforms under way, in the area of public financial management, regulating the management of natural resources, as well as policies to develop the financial sector, and the private business sector.

Tete declared mine free

The western Mozambican province of Tete on 17 December was formally declared free of land mines.

According to Alberto Augusto, director of the National Demining Institute (IND), speaking at a ceremony in Chitima, in Cahora Bassa district, during the demining operations, 74,915 anti-personnel mines were destroyed, and about five million square metres of land (equivalent to 467 football fields) was released for productive use.

The operations also discovered three anti-tank mines, 389 other items of unexploded ordnance, and 134 small calibre munitions.

In its National Mine Action Plan for 2008-2014, the IND described Tete as the most mined province in the country. The mines uncovered in Tete account for about 85 per cent of the mines destroyed throughout the country.

There were two main areas where the land mines were concentrated – along the 11 kilometre perimeter protecting the Cahora Bassa dam, and along a stretch of 15 kilometres on the border with Zimbabwe.

The lengthy and complex demining operations in Tete involved the three main humanitarian mine clearance operators working in Mozambique – Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), the Halo Trust and Apopo – and more than ten commercial operators.

Eight provinces and 123 districts have now been declared free of mines. The mine-free provinces are Maputo, Gaza, Inhambane, Tete, Zambezia, Nampula, Niassa and Cabo Delgado.

According to Augusto all that remains to be done is to clear "a few square metres of land where the presence of anti-personnel mines is suspected in five districts in Manica and Sofala provinces". He expected the work in Manica and Sofala to end in the first quarter of 2015.

Mozambique is a party to the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel landmines. It ratified the treaty in 1999, and had ten years to completely demine the country. This proved impossible, and so Mozambique sought and was granted a five year extension, to 2014.

LAM introduces cheap flights

Mozambique Airlines (LAM) has announced the introduction of cheap air fares, known as "Letzgo", for selected domestic flights as from January.

The cheap flights will all be at night, and will be between the cities of Maputo, Beira, Nampula, Tete and Quelimane.

The price reduction is substantial. A normal return ticket from Maputo to Beira costs 13,625 meticaís (about US\$432). With a Letzgo ticket, the price falls to 8,928 meticaís.

Meanwhile, LAM has also announced that it is increasing the number of flights between Maputo and the new international airport in the northern port city of Nacala to five per week.

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