

**2563.    Mr N L S Kwankwa (UDM) to ask the President of the Republic:**

What steps did South Africa as Chair of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation from 2016 until August 2017 take after President Kabila and the Electoral Commission announced that the elections will no longer be held in 2017 and that President Kabila will stand for re-election on an election date to be determined contrary to the December 2016 agreement signed by the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) led by President Joseph Kabila, the opposition parties led by the Union for Democracy and Social Progress and civil society organisations aimed at averting a slide into anarchy and civil war in the DRC, which requires President Kabila, whose term of office expired in December 2016 to step down after the elections that must take place before the end of 2017 and (b) did the Government of South Africa take any steps to quell the violence that erupted in the DRC immediately after the violation of this agreement, in order to ensure peace and stability in the region?           NW2823E

**REPLY:**

South Africa was not the Chair of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation from 2016 to August 2017.

It should be noted that SADC through the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation remains seized with the political developments in the DRC. The Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation works on the basis of the Troika which at the time comprised of the Current Chair which was the United Republic of Tanzania, the Republic of Angola as Incoming-Chair and the Republic of Mozambique as Outgoing Chair.

Following the demonstrations led by the opposition parties in the DRC on 19 and 20 September 2016 which resulted in violence, deaths and destruction of property, the Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, H.E. Dr. John Pombe Joseph Magufuli, President of the Republic of the United Republic of Tanzania mandated the deployment of an Organ Troika Ministerial Assessment Mission to the DRC from 10 to 13 October 2016. The Assessment Mission was led by the Hon. Dr. Augustine P. Mahiga, Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania as Chairperson, who was accompanied by Hon. Georges R. Chikoti, Minister of External Relations of the Republic of Angola and Deputy Chairperson and  Hon. Patricio Jose, Deputy Minister of National Defence of the Republic of Mozambique representing the Outgoing Chairperson  of the  Ministerial Committee of the Organ (MCO) on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation.

The Organ Troika Assessment Mission made the following observations and conclusions:

1. The political situation in the DRC remained volatile, thus necessitating the need for SADC to remain closely seized with the DRC situation and required deployment of  regular follow-up missions and continued expression of SADC support of the DRC;
2. The Inclusive National Political Dialogue and the implementation of the outcomes thereof remains paramount in terms of garnering popular support to the electoral process, and the need to ensure the conduct of peaceful credible elections;
3. The process of updating the voters’ register should be expedited and finalised within the time line to be agreed upon by the stakeholders;
4. The regular deployment of follow-up SADC missions, including the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC), has been prioritised and will remain a priority in order to enhance the visibility of SADC’s continued involvement and to demonstrate  SADC’s support to the DRC peace, security and electoral processes;
5. SADC to ensure that there is high level engagement with the Government of the DRC, especially within the current period up to December 2016, in order to encourage the Government and other stakeholders to refrain from resorting to violence, and instead continue to dialogue with opposition groups with a view to addressing the outstanding issues; and
6. The International Community should be encouraged to support the DRC National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) financially and materially in relation to the on-going voters’ registration process that will facilitate the conduct of combined presidential, parliamentary, and provincial elections, to be followed by local elections.

A Double Troika Summit of Heads of State and Government was also held in Lozitha, Kingdom of Swaziland on 17 March 2017 and noted that the political and security developments in the DRC and:

1. commended the President of the DRC H.E. Joseph Kabila Kabange, the Government of the DRC, the National Episcopal Conference of Catholic Bishops for the DRC (CENCO), political parties and other stakeholders for the continued  efforts in addressing the political security challenges;
2. noted and commended CENCO for the renewed meditation efforts, and urged the DRC stakeholders to finalise the Specific Arrangements for the Implementation of the 31st December 2016 Political Agreement, in particular the nomination of the Chairperson of the National Monitoring Committee, and encouraged the opposition to expeditiously submit the nominees for the position of the Prime Minister (now appointed);
3. called upon the International Community to support the DRC in the electoral processes that are expected to facilitate peaceful and successful elections; and
4. mandated the Organ Ministerial Troika to immediately conduct a follow-up mission to the DRC, on a date to be agreed upon in consultation with the Chairperson of the Organ and the Government of the DRC.

These efforts demonstrate that SADC remains committed in ensuring that the situation in the DRC is resolved in order for peace and security to prevail.  South Africa will play her role as SADC chairperson to ensure that the peace and stability goals of SADC in the region are achieved.