



LAW SOCIETY
OF SOUTH AFRICA

PRESS RELEASE

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**ATTORNEYS TO BE THE EYES AND EARS OF CITIZENS BY OBSERVING THE
7 MAY 2014 NATIONAL ELECTIONS**

The Law Society of South Africa (LSSA) has set up an observer team of 275 attorneys and candidate attorneys to observe the National Elections on 7 May 2014. 'They will serve as the eyes and ears of our citizens,' say LSSA Co-Chairpersons Max Boqwana and Ettienne Barnard.

They add: 'When South Africa was a nascent democracy in 1994, we had the eyes of the world on us. In that first historic election and in the following elections, many international and regional bodies and NGOs sent observers. As we mature in our democracy, the perception has developed that our electoral process is free, fair and transparent. We believe that to be so. But as the interest of foreign observers and monitor has waned and turned to other jurisdictions, the onus increases on us to ensure that our elections and electoral processes remain sound and beyond question. For that reason the LSSA's attorneys and candidate attorneys have volunteered their time to serve as observers on election day.'

The LSSA is placing highly trained observers in voting stations and counting stations across the country, as well as ensuring the presence of independent lawyers in the elections results centre. They will assess the electoral process with a particular emphasis on compliance with regulations, laws, procedures and codes of conduct. They will also evaluate participation of our people and their understanding of the process.

LSSA observers have attended a full-day training workshop where they have familiarised themselves with the relevant aspects of the Constitution, the Electoral Act 73 of 1998, the Electoral Commission Act 51 of 1996, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance adopted by the African Union in 2007, the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections as well as the role of and code of conduct for independent observers. The trainings materials for the LSSA observers have been sponsored by LexisNexis.

Observers will submit reports and the LSSA will compile and present its observations to the Electoral Commission and make these available to the public.

'Through this observer mission we intend to provide support for our Electoral Commission by supporting and strengthening the integrity of the elections process. We echo the IEC in saying that credible elections are an expression of active citizenship and the free expression of the free will of the people, which provides the basis for the authority and legitimacy of a sitting government,' Say Mr Boqwana and Mr Barnard.

The LSSA's domestic observer mission will be complemented by an international foreign observer mission by the SADC Lawyers Association, which is deploying an observer mission

headed by prominent Nigerian lawyer Boma Ozobia SAN, the past president of the Commonwealth Lawyers Association.

ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE CO-CHAIRPERSONS OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA, ETTIENNE BARNARD AND MAX BOQWANA

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Editor's note:

The Law Society of South Africa brings together its six constituent members – the Cape Law Society, the KwaZulu-Natal Law Society, the Law Society of the Free State, the Law Society of the Northern Provinces, the Black Lawyers Association and the National Association of Democratic Lawyers – in representing South Africa's 22 250 attorneys and 5 780 candidate attorneys.