
nbc Election Coverage Preparations 2014 – Post Elections

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

05 December 2014, Windhoek; Namibia The Namibian Broadcasting Corporation was at its readiest for this year's election. With the Election Policy in place and well received by political parties, the policy was just one example of how ready the broadcaster was to ensure fair and equal coverage to all registered political parties that contended in the elections.

nbc Director General, Albertus Aochamub said, "With the implementation of the Election Policy and Election Forum, we hope that other countries across SADC follow this example."

This was the first time in the history of the broadcaster and that of the country that all protocols set out by the policy were adhered to. Key points for this year included the allocation of equal airtime, with the option of free airtime and commercially available airtime. Aochamub continued, "The public needed to look beyond the television news bulletin for political party coverage. The nbc had dedicated election programs such as Election Talks, Namibia Votes, Election Corner as well as One on One and provided a platform for political parties to share their party manifestos to the nation at large."

The 2014 election coverage saw a massive change from previous elections. nbc deployed reporters accompanied by camera operators to all the regions of Namibia equipped with technology to live stream events in real time. The broadcaster also introduced the airing of an extra news bulletin dedicated to election coverage and was the only media institution to broadcast the election challenge court proceedings live. nbc was present at the Electoral Commission of Namibia's head office to uncover elections results as they unfolded and in turn the reactions of candidates. Election Day was set out by law to serve as a black out day in terms of political campaigning, that is to say that no campaigns or political party coverage took place. In this regard, only the elections and results took precedence.

In view of the mandate given to the nbc, there were certain legal expectations. One such can be drawn from Article 18 of the Namibian Constitution which expects public bodies, like the nbc; to always act lawfully, reasonably and fairly. Other obligations are contained in Section 3 of the Namibian Broadcasting Act 9 of 1991.

Further to that, the nbc is expected to respect the rights of other persons (both natural and legal persons), failure of which could lead to defamatory claims. The Election Policy and Forum served the broadcaster in this regard as a platform whereby political parties could air their grievances in written format and be treated fairly and equally. The Election Coverage Policy and Guidelines served as a useful guide this time around. For one, the allocation of the free airtime for political party messages was strictly done in line with the letter and spirit of the policy. The policy provided for the creation of the Election Forum, which in the past few weeks proved useful in the sharing of information between the nbc and political parties. Overall, the Policy truly served its purpose. The nbc received positive feedback from the various parties firstly for the mere fact that the policy was implemented.

In addition to the legalities, nbc's Legal Advisor and Company Secretary, Steven Ndorokaze stated, "As part of the preparations for elections, our teams which were deployed in the regions were subjected to training sessions, with parts dedicated to focusing on legal matters. The objective was to ensure that our staff was made aware of the need to respect other people's rights, notwithstanding our national obligation to source information and disseminate same. I believe this exercise will go a long way in ensuring that the nbc does not expose itself to unnecessary law suits."

Aochamub concluded that the nbc has indeed played its part in the 2014 elections as best as it could. nbc covered the elections from all polling stations and had its social media, television and radio teams working around the clock to ensure that results were delivered to the masses as they were released. The SADC Elections Observer Mission congratulated the nbc for having an Election Coverage Policy in the absence of a national coverage policy for media. They also recognized and praised the equity in that coverage.



nbc Star Anchors Kazembire Zemburuka and Ricardo Goagoseb updating the nation on the latest election results at ECN media centre

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