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NAMIBIA: ELECTION OUTLOOK

Implementation of 435 independence plan

After a decade of both diplomatic initiatives and escalating conflict, 1989 has at last seen the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 435 (1978) which provides the framework for Namibia's transition to independence. The elections scheduled for 7-11 November 1989 will be contested by ten parties and alliances - competing for the support of 701 483 registered voters.

ELECTION PROVISIONS

Under Proclamation NO 19 of 1989, issued by the Administrator General (with the agreement of the UN Special Representative), the following categories of voters are entitled to vote:

Anyone who is 18 years old or older or who turns 18 during the registration period, and was born in Namibia, even though he or she no longer resides there.

Anyone who is 18 years old or older and has lived in Namibia continuously for four years or more before the registration period.

Anyone who is 18 years old or older and who is the natural child of a person born in Namibia.

Prisoners and detainees who qualify for registration.

Anyone who was seconded to Namibia continuously for four years or longer and states under oath that he or she intends to remain after independence.

Under a system of proportional representation (the Hare system), the ten parties and alliances participating in the UN supervised elections have drawn up party lists of their respective candidates. The electorate will vote for parties to a 72-member Constituent Assembly that will draft and independence constitution. A two-thirds majority will be required for adoption of the constitution by the Assembly. Independence will then follow. (Another election for a government of the independent state may be required, or the Constituent Assembly may decide to establish the first government, in terms of the constitution.)

THE PARTIES/ALLIANCES

The following parties and alliances have registered for the elections:

AKSIE CHRISTELIK NASIONAAL (ACN)/ACTION CHRISTIAN NATIONAL based on the all-white National Party of SWA under Kosis Pretorius and Jan de Wet.

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC ACTION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE (CDA) under Peter Kalangula.

THE DEMOCRATIC TURNHALLE ALLIANCE (DTA), an alliance of 12 ethnic parties under Mishake Mujongo and Dirk Mudge.

FEDERAL CONVENTION OF NAMIBIA (FCN) the election front of the Rehoboth Liberation Front under Kaptein Hans Diergaardt.

NAMIBIA NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (NNDP) a small electoral alliance with some Herero, Nama and Dama support.

NAMIBIA NATIONAL FRONT (NNF) an electoral alliance of four parties under Dr Kenneth Abrahams, his wife and Adv. Vekuii Rukoro.

NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FRONT OF NAMIBIA (NPF) an electoral alliance of three parties under Moses Katjiungua and Adv. Eben van Zijl.

SWAPO-DEMOCRATS (SWAPO -D) under Andreas Shipanga.

SWAPO OF NAMIBIA (SWAPO) under Sam Nujoma.

UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT (UDF) an alliance of five parties under Justice Garoeb.

The election is likely to turn on five electoral districts:

Ovambo (248 272 voters); Windhoek (105 382 voters); Kavango (64 156 voters); Caprivi (28 096 voters) and Swakopmund (25 363 voters).

THE ISSUES

The following issues will shape the electoral prospects of the different parties / alliances:

Uncertainty over detainees held by SWAPO in Angola and Zambia. While most of the detainees are non-Ovambo, SWAPO is likely to lose support among the Nama and Dama.

The quality - or lack of it - of SWAPO leadership in general, and confidence or otherwise in its President, Sam Nujoma, in particular.

The question of actual and perceived intimidation and violence - mostly involving DTA and SWAPO supporters, as well as former KOEVOET members.

The choice of campaign strategy, tactics and access to resources. The DTA, NNF and NPF fought issue-directed campaigns. SWAPO opted for a mobilisation strategy informed by the 1979-80 election experience in Zimbabwe.

Attitudes to South Africa as the "occupying power".

PROBABLE OUTCOME

Estimates of the electoral strengths of the parties vary considerably, but the outcome will probably be broadly as follows:

SWAPO of Namibia (SWAPO) is likely to emerge as the dominant party in the proposed Constituent Assembly with between 60-66% of support, slightly short of the 2/3 majority. It commands unrivalled symbolic power and enjoys the backing of Namibia's biggest ethnic group - the Ovambo.

The Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) is unlikely to get more than 25% of national support. Its image has been tarnished through association with South African - instituted structures. (No forecasts give the DTA more than 40%).

The United Democratic Front (UDF) is likely to gain third place after SWAPO and the DTA and seems a natural coalition partner for SWAPO, if the latter fails to obtain a 2/3 majority on its own.

Aksie Christelik Nasionaal (ACN), the Federal Convention of Namibia (FCN), the National Patriotic Front of Namibia (NPF) and the Namibia National Front (NNF) are likely to have some representation in the Constituent Assembly.

It is doubtful whether the Christian Democratic Action for Social Justice (CDA), the Namibia National Democratic Party (NNDP) and the SWAPO-Democrats (SWAPO-D) will be represented, but there could be some surprises.

JAN SMUTS HOUSE

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