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PRESS RELEASE

Namibia refutes article in the Botswana online newspaper “Mmegionline” entitled “28th AU Summit: SADC sabotages Venson-Moitoi”

On the 31st of January 2017, a Botswana Online newspaper called “Mmegionline”, published an Article titled “**28th AU Summit: SADC sabotages Venson-Moitoi**”.

The Mmegionline alleges in the article that “In August in Swaziland all 15 states pledged to vote for Hon. Dr. Venson-Moitoi, Botswana’s Foreign Minister, but an analysis results shows that only ten SADC states supported Venson-Moitoi in the first round, before two more pulled out in the second round. The article alleged that, while analysts pointed out that five of the 15 SADC member states - Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and Tanzania - belong to other regions of the AU, these all supported Venson-Moitoi in July 2016. The article made a serious allegation that, sources in Addis Ababa said suspicions were swirling around South Africa, Lesotho and **Namibia** as being among possible saboteurs.

The Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation (MIRCO) of the Republic of Namibia, as the custodian of Namibia's foreign policy,

unequivocally refutes the above misrepresentation by the Mmegionline, which published an article based on suspicions and hear-say, depicting a lack of professionalism and proper research. MIRCO therefore wishes to present the facts of the matter for purposes of providing clarity and correcting the newspaper's misrepresentations as follows:

1. Following the endorsement by SADC in March 2016, of Hon. Dr. Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi as SADC's candidate for the position of Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Namibia was one of the first countries to publically declare its support for Hon. Dr. Venson-Moitoi, including through a Decision of the Cabinet of the Republic of Namibia to fully SADC's candidate.
2. In this regard, Namibia's reputation within SADC is well known. Namibia is a country, governed by the rule of law and principles that guide its foreign policy, including at the SADC level. This is evident through its respect and implementation of relevant SADC Decisions on a broad range of issues.
3. That is why, during the July 2016 AU Assembly, Namibia, along with all other Member States of SADC, unequivocally supported the SADC Candidate who garnered the highest number of votes in all three rounds, surpassing all other candidates; albeit she did not get the required two-thirds majority, according to Rule 38 (1) of the AU Rules of Procedure. The elections were therefore postponed until January 2017.
4. Following the postponement of the elections, Namibia was selected by the SADC Campaign Team on SADC's Candidate to form part of an Outreach Committee to solicit support from other AU Member States. During this period, Namibia actively reached out to AU Member States entrusted to the Committee.
5. Meetings at the level of Heads of State and Government and Ministers in support of SADC's Candidate were held on the margins of the 28th AU Assembly, in which Namibia participated.

6. During the elections, Namibia and other SADC Member States supported Hon. Dr. Venson-Moitoi, which enabled her to get to the third round, after the candidates from Senegal and Equatorial Guinea fell out, respectively.
7. Although Hon. Dr. Venson-Moitoi's Campaign did not win her the victory, the support from SADC Member States was a sure demonstration of the unity and bond in the SADC family.

Against this background, MIRCO strongly repudiates the misinformed article by the "Mmegionline", published on 31 January 2017, and calls upon the Editor to retract these fabrications against Namibia.