

Government must release results of assessment of provincial de-centralized governance and feasibility of district elections in 2024

- A year has passed and the Government is yet to release the findings of the assessment by consultants on provincial de-centralized governance and the prognosis on the feasibility of district elections in 2024. The release of the results of the analysis is important to inform an inclusive and open debate on the implementation of the de-centralization package approved in 2018, a process that matters to all Mozambicans.



- The silence regarding the assessment made on the functioning of the provincial de-centralized governance bodies and the feasibility of district elections in 2024 increases fears that the Government is preparing, away from public scrutiny, proposals to revise the legislative package on de-centralization. As happened with the revision proposal of the Basic Law on the Creation, Organization and Functioning of Local Authorities, whose debate in the plenary of the Assembly of the Republic was postponed two weeks ago.

In an interview given to the newspaper *Notícias*, edition of 11th January 2021, Augusto Mangove, General Inspector of Public Administration and National Coordinator of the Group responsible for the elaboration of the De-centralization Package in the Ministry of State Administration and Public Function, announced that the Government had launched an international tender to select a consulting firm that would carry out a functional analysis on the organization and functioning of the provincial de-centralized governance bodies and the representation of the State in the province. The aim was to identify the strengths to be capitalized on and the weaknesses to be improved.

In the same tender, the Government also asked the consultants to make a prognosis on what the de-centralization process will be like in 2024, the year in which district elections are scheduled to take place. In this process the District Assembly will be elected, from where the District Administrator will emerge. With the prognosis, the Government wants to know whether it is worth continuing with the de-centralisation process agreed in 2018, which provides for provincial and district de-centralized governance bodies.

In addition to the provincial de-centralized governance bodies (Provincial Assembly, Province Governor, Provincial Executive Council), the revision of the Republic of Mozambique Constitution (CRM) operated in 2018 instituted district de-centralized governance bodies, namely the District Assembly, District Administrator, District Executive Council. As in the province, in the district there will be the State Representative (body representing



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the State in the District in the exclusive areas of State sovereignty).

Basically, the bodies of de-centralized district governance are a replica of the bodies of de-centralized provincial governance, which means that the serious problems arising from the lack of clarification of the competencies and scope of action of the Provincial Governor and the Secretary of State in the province, including disputes over protagonism, will also be notorious in the districts, especially in the relationship between the District Administrator and the State Representative in the District, if the district elections go ahead.

When President Filipe Nyusi and then-Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama agreed to introduce a new provincial and district de-centralization package, the opposition had a strong chance of winning the provincial elections and governing some provinces in the centre and north of the country. Fearing a Renamo victory, Frelimo 'hollowed out' the executive bodies of de-centralised provincial governance, leaving the provincial governor without de facto powers, and gave 'superpowers' to the Secretaries of State in the province, figures appointed by the President of the Republic and accountable to him.

In the rush to secure political control over territories of de-centralized governance, the ruling party did not assess either the financial costs or the dispute over competencies that would result from the creation of two executive structures in the province: the Provincial Executive Council (headed by the Governor of the Province) and the Council of Provincial Services of State Representation (headed by a Secretary of State).

In the same interview, Augusto Mangove said that if the consultants' assessment advised against moving towards district elections in 2024 a revision of the Republic's Constitution would be necessary. Forecasts indicated that the results of the functional analysis on

the organization and functioning of the bodies of de-centralized provincial governance and representation of the State in the province would be known in February last year.

A year has passed and the government has still not released the conclusions of the assessment carried out by consultants on provincial de-centralized governance and the prognosis on district elections in 2024. The release of the results of the analysis is important to inform an inclusive and open debate on the implementation of the de-centralization package approved in 2018, a process that matters to all Mozambicans.

At the fourth session of the Frelimo Central Committee held in May 2021, some members of the ruling party defended the postponement of the district elections scheduled for 2024, alleging "conjunctural issues". In fact, the first postponement of the election of District Administrators happened in 2018, when the CRM established that the first district elections would be held in 2014 - and not 2019, as happened with the provincial elections. In its transitional provisions, the CRM established that until the first district elections are held, the District Administrator is appointed by the Minister who oversees the Local Administration area of the State, in consultation with the Governor of the Province.

- The silence regarding the assessment made on the functioning of the provincial de-centralized governance bodies and the feasibility of district elections in 2024 increases fears that the Government is preparing, away from public scrutiny, proposals to revise the legislative package on de-centralization. As happened with the revision proposal of the Basic Law on the Creation, Organization and Functioning of Local Authorities, whose debate in the plenary of the Assembly of the Republic was postponed two weeks ago in Parliament due to disagreement between the Frelimo and opposition benches (Rena-

mo and MDM).

The proposal to revise the Basic Law for the Creation, Organization and Functioning of Local Authorities - aims to amend Law no. 6/2018, of 3 August (amended and republished by Law no. 13/2018, of 17 December),

was not informed by a public debate, i.e. it was produced by the Government without the participation of citizens. Therefore, the CDD demands that the Parliament return the proposal to the Government to allow the document to be submitted to public consul-

tation. CDD also demands that the Government disclose the results of the evaluation made of the functioning of the provincial de-centralised governance bodies and the prognosis on the viability of district elections in 2024.



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