

Electoral (Amendment) Bill 2012

SECOND READING SPEECH

H.E. Hon Sprent Dabwido

President and Chairman of the Cabinet, Minister responsible for the Act

12 July 2012

Mr Speaker,

I am very humbled to introduce to this House today the *Electoral (Amendment) Bill 2012*.

As Members are aware, it was proposed in the course of the constitutional review process to increase the number of members of Parliament for the constituency of Meneng from 2 members to 3.

Although the proposed constitutional amendments have not succeeded, it is possible to increase the number of members by making an amendment to the *Electoral Act 1965*. It does not require an amendment to the text of the Constitution, because Article 28(1) of the Constitution provides. that ‘Parliament shall consist of eighteen members or such greater number as is prescribed by law.’

This Bill would amend section 5 of the *Electoral Act* to provide that the constituency of Meneng is represented by 3 members rather than 2.

In the first election held under the *Electoral Act*, there were 176 registered voters in Meneng. In the most recent general election in 2010 Meneng had 900 voters. The national voting population has more than

tripled since the first election, but in Meneng the population has increased more than six-fold.

The discrepancy in the voter-to-member ratio between Meneng and other constituencies, with Meneng being significantly under-represented, was noted by the Constitutional Review Commission in 2007. The Commission recommended that Meneng should have a third seat in Parliament, which would bring the voter-to-Member ratio for Meneng in line with that in other constituencies.

The current under-representation of the people of Meneng puts those people at a disadvantage in terms of being able to gain access to and quality time with their members of Parliament.

As a member for Meneng, I understand, and the people of Meneng understand, that this proposed amendment to ensure more equitable representation can only be achieved with the gracious support of other members from other constituencies. In the interests of the fair representation of the people of Meneng, I humbly ask all members for their support.

Mr Speaker, I commend this Bill to the House.

Thank-you.