

Chapter 1

Introduction

At the invitation of the Government of Papua New Guinea, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr Kamallesh Sharma, constituted an Observer Group for the June–July 2012 National Elections. In line with usual practice, the Secretary-General sent an assessment mission to Papua New Guinea to assess the pre-electoral environment, prior to his final decision on whether to constitute a Commonwealth Observer Group. The Assessment Mission was in the country from 12–16 March 2012.

The Commonwealth Observer Group for the 2012 national elections was led by the Honourable Edward Natapei MP, Deputy Leader of the Opposition and former Prime Minister of Vanuatu, and comprised eight eminent persons in total. The Observer Group was supported by a six-person staff team from the Commonwealth Secretariat. A full list of members is at [Annex 1](#).

Terms of reference

'The Group is established by the Commonwealth Secretary-General at the invitation of the Government of Papua New Guinea. The Group is to consider the various factors impinging on the credibility of the electoral process as a whole.

It will determine in its own judgement whether the elections have been conducted according to the standards for democratic elections to which the country has committed itself, with reference to national election-related legislation and relevant regional, Commonwealth and other international commitments.

The Group is to act impartially and independently. It has no executive role; its function is not to supervise but to observe the process as a whole and to form a judgement accordingly. It would also be free to propose to the authorities concerned such action on institutional, procedural and other matters as would assist the holding of such elections.

The Group is to submit its report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, who will forward it to the Government of Papua New Guinea, the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission, political parties taking part in the elections and thereafter to all Commonwealth Governments.'

Activities

The Observer Group was present in Papua New Guinea from 16 June to 16 July 2012. During three days of briefings, the Group met with the Papua New Guinea Electoral

Commission (PNGEC), the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission (IPPC), political party representatives, civil society groups, media, Commonwealth High Commissioners, and national and other international observer missions.

An Arrival Statement was issued on 19 June 2012 (see [Annex 2](#)). The Observer Group was deployed from 21 June to 11 July. Teams reported from 16 of the 22 Provinces of Papua New Guinea, covering all four regions of the country (see [Annex 3](#)). During deployment teams followed the close of the campaign and met with election officials, candidates, political party and civil society representatives, police, members of the public and other observers in their respective areas, to build up a comprehensive picture of the conduct of the process.

On the basis of the Group's initial findings and observations, the Chairperson issued an Interim Statement on 11 July 2012 (see [Annex 4](#)). The Group's Final Report was completed in Port Moresby prior to its departure.