

Chapter 1

Introduction

Following an invitation from the Chairman of the Electoral Commission of Ghana (EC), the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr Kamallesh Sharma, constituted an Observer Group for the 7 December 2012 Presidential and Parliamentary elections. Prior to his final decision on constituting a Commonwealth Observer Group, the Secretary-General initially sent an Assessment Mission to Ghana to assess the prevailing situation as well as the pre-electoral environment. The Assessment Mission was in the country in September 2012.

The Commonwealth Observer Group for the 2012 elections in Ghana was led by H.E. Dr Pakalitha Mosisili, MP, former Prime Minister of Lesotho, and comprised thirteen eminent persons in total. The Observer Group was supported by a five-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 request of the Electoral Commission of Ghana. It is to observe relevant aspects of the organisation and conduct of the Presidential and Parliamentary Elections which are scheduled to take place on 7 December 2012, in accordance with the laws of Ghana.

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 judgment whether the elections have been conducted according to the standards for democratic elections to which Ghana 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 and shall conduct itself according to the standards expressed in the International Declaration of Principles to which the Commonwealth is a signatory. It has no executive role; its function is not to supervise but to observe the process as a whole and to form a judgment accordingly. In its Final Report, the Group is also free to propose to the authorities concerned recommendations for change on institutional, procedural and other matters as would assist the holding of future elections.

The Group is to submit its report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General who will forward it to the Government of Ghana, the Electoral Commission, political and civil society organisations and thereafter to all Commonwealth Governments.'

Activities

The Observer Group arrived in Ghana on 30 November 2012. During four days of briefings, the Group met with the Electoral Commission, political party representatives, civil society

groups, media, Commonwealth High Commissions, and national and international observer missions.

An Arrival Statement was issued on 4 December 2012 (Annex 2). The Observer Group was deployed from 5–9 December 2012. Teams were based in seven of the ten Regions of Ghana. During deployment teams met with election officials, political party and civil society representatives, security agencies as well as other observers.

On the basis of the Group's initial findings and observations, the Chairperson issued an Interim Statement on 9 December 2012 (Annex 3). The Group's Final Report was completed in Accra prior to departure on 14 December 2012 and thereafter transmitted to the Commonwealth Secretary-General.