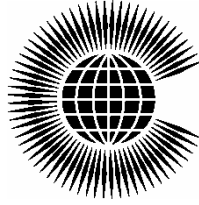


Annex 3

Arrival Statement



Commonwealth Observer Group Rwanda Presidential Elections

9 August 2010

NEWS RELEASE

Arrival Statement by H.E. Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim

Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Kamallesh Sharma, has constituted an Observer Group for the 2010 Rwanda Presidential Elections, following an invitation from the National Electoral Commission of Rwanda.

It is my honour and privilege to have been asked to lead this Commonwealth Observer Group and be here in Rwanda for these important elections. Rwanda is the newest member of the Commonwealth and there is a great interest in these first elections since membership was confirmed.

Democracy, human rights and good governance are core Commonwealth principles and ones which our Observer Group is constituted to promote and uphold. These elections are crucially important for the people of Rwanda as they elect their President, and it is therefore imperative that the electoral process is transparent, fair and credible.

Our task as the Commonwealth Observer Group is to observe and report on relevant aspects of the organisation and conduct of the elections and also on the environment in which the election is held. The Group will consider all the factors impinging on the credibility of the electoral process as a whole, and assess whether the elections have been conducted according to the standards for democratic elections to which Rwanda has committed itself, with reference to its own election-related legislation as well as relevant regional, Commonwealth and other international commitments.

We will consider, among other things, whether conditions exist for free and competitive elections; the transparency of the process; participation rights; the impartiality of state apparatus and public media; whether candidates were free to campaign on a level playing field; whether freedom of expression is provided for, and whether voters were free to express their will.

In conducting our duties and undertaking our assessment, we will be impartial, objective and independent. Commonwealth Observers are present here in their individual capacities as eminent Commonwealth citizens. The assessment by the Group will be its own and not that of member governments. If we offer criticism it will be constructive, with the intent to help further strengthen the democratic process in the country.

The team of Observers come from across the Commonwealth, and includes politicians, members of election commissions, and representatives of civil society, academia and the media.

In the pre-election period we will meet, among others, with officials from the National Electoral Commission, representatives of political parties, civil society and media, as well as High Commissions and representatives of other international and national observer groups. Prior to election day, Commonwealth teams will deploy to various provinces around the country to observe the voting, counting and results processes. We will issue an Interim Statement after the election and a final report at a later stage.

For Rwanda, as a country still in democratic transition, the conduct of peaceful, transparent and credible elections is vital, as is the need for an environment which nurtures inclusiveness and pluralism. I wish the people of Rwanda well and hope that these elections serve to strengthen the democratic process in the country.

Kigali, 4 August 2010

Note to Editors

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