

Annex 3

Arrival Statement



Commonwealth Observer Group Kenya General Elections 2013

NEWS RELEASE

Arrival Statement by H.E. Festus Mogae Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group

Following an invitation from the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) of Kenya, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Kamalesh Sharma, has constituted an Observer Group for the 2013 General Elections. It is my honour and privilege to have been asked to lead the Group, and to be here in the country for these important elections.

I am also pleased to lead a team of sixteen eminent persons drawn from across the Commonwealth, including politicians, members of election management bodies, judiciary, former diplomats, civil society, youth and the media.

The Commonwealth has a long tradition of support for elections in Kenya, including observing the 2007 polls. We are pleased to be in the country as the people of Kenya take this next step in the consolidation of the democratic process in Kenya following the adoption of the new Constitution and the creation of a series of new representative institutions.

For Kenya, the 2013 elections represent a critical moment. It is a moment when the eyes of Africa, the Commonwealth and the world are upon you. As everybody is aware, and nobody more than the people of Kenya, the 2007 elections led to a tragic crisis, resulting in large-scale loss of life, displacement of people, destruction of property and a loss of confidence in the democratic process and institutions.

It is to Kenya's credit that in the subsequent years some of this confidence, notably with regard to the management of the electoral process, has been re-gained by the way a series

of by-elections and the 2010 referendum were conducted. These elections are the next step and it is imperative that first and foremost political contestants engage in all phases of the process in a responsible manner, abiding by the Code of Conduct they have signed and ensuring a peaceful election that Kenya can be proud of. Media also has a responsibility to ensure that its coverage is balanced and measured and does not incite unrest. We also very much hope the IEBC, given the complexity of the task it faces on this occasion, can manage the process in a credible and transparent manner, thereby ensuring that Kenyan voters have the opportunity to express their will and electoral stakeholders maintain confidence in the process.

Our task as the Commonwealth Observer Group is to 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 Kenya has committed itself, with reference to its own election-related legislation as well as relevant regional, Commonwealth and other international commitments.

In conducting our duties and undertaking our assessment, we will be impartial, objective and independent. We are here in our individual capacities as eminent Commonwealth citizens. The assessment by the Group will be its own, and not that of any member government.

In the pre-election period we will meet a wide range of stakeholders, including the IEBC, representatives of political parties, civil society and media, as well as High Commissions and representatives of other international and national observer groups.

Prior to polling day, Commonwealth teams will deploy to a variety of locations around the country to observe the voting, counting and results processes. Our teams will co-ordinate with other observers in the field in order to maximise our overview of the process. We will issue an Interim Statement after the election and a final report at a later stage.

I wish the people of Kenya well and I also wish to pledge the unwavering solidarity of the Commonwealth as you go into these elections.

Nairobi, Thursday 28 February 2013