

Annex 4

Pre-Election Statement by Dr Bakili Muluzi



Observer Group Chair calls on all stakeholders to ensure Lesotho polling day goes smoothly

25 May 2012

Statement by Dr Bakili Muluzi, Former President of the Republic of Malawi and Chair of the Commonwealth Observer Group for the 2012 Lesotho Parliamentary Elections

As the people of Lesotho go to the polls on Saturday 26 May 2012, I would like, on behalf of the Commonwealth Observer Group which I am leading, to call upon all stakeholders in the electoral process to play their roles with due diligence to ensure that the process on polling day, the counting, the announcement of results and events thereafter go smoothly without incident.

Since we arrived in the country on 19 May 2012, our Group has met a cross section of interested parties in these elections, and heard about the preparations and concerns that could impinge on the credibility of the elections.

We subsequently raised these concerns with our interlocutors, notably, the Independent Electoral Commission, political parties, civil society, the army and the police, and received assurances that the will of the people to choose their leaders will be guaranteed and respected. We take these assurances as a good gesture, conveyed in good faith and a demonstration of the commitment of the stakeholders to democracy.

In our experience, the polling day itself often goes without incident. It is the counting, tabulation and the aftermath of the announcement of results that often raises concern. It is in this light that I call upon all political party leaders and their supporters to show restraint and magnanimity as the results process unfolds in the days following the poll.

We appeal to everyone involved in the election process to respect the laws of the land and the Constitution, and to do the Kingdom of Lesotho, Africa and the Commonwealth proud by conducting a credible election that meets the standards to which the country has subscribed.

I have often said that we chose democracy for ourselves in Africa and the Commonwealth – we therefore must live and adhere to its tenets. Democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights including the right to vote and to choose leaders freely without intimidation and violence, are some of the core values and principles of the Commonwealth. There is no better occasion to uphold them than during elections. The people must be confident that their vote will count and that there will be freedom, peace and calm after voting.

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