

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

At the invitation of the President of Zambia, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr Kamallesh Sharma, constituted an Observer Group for the 20 September 2011 General Elections. In line with usual practice, the Secretary-General sent an Assessment Mission to Zambia to assess the prevailing situation as well as 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 31 July to 5 August 2011.

The Commonwealth Observer Group for the 20 September 2011 elections was led by H.E. General Yakubu Gowon, who is a former Head of State of Nigeria, and comprised twelve eminent persons. 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 request of the President of Zambia. It is to observe relevant aspects of the organisation and conduct of the General Elections which are scheduled to take place on 20 September 2011, in accordance with the laws of Zambia.

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 Zambia 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 Zambia, the Electoral Commission, political and civil society organizations and thereafter to all Commonwealth Governments."

Activities

The Observer Group was present in Zambia from 13 September 2011. During four days of briefings, the Group met with the Electoral Commission of Zambia, political party representatives, civil society groups, women's groups, youth representatives, media,

Commonwealth High Commissions, and national, regional and international observer missions.

An Arrival Statement was issued on 15 September 2011 (see Annex 2). The Observer Group was deployed from 18-22 September. Teams were based in eight of the nine Provinces of Zambia. During deployment teams met with election officials, political party and civil society representatives, security agencies as well as other observers, national regional and international, 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 22 September 2011 (Annex 3). The Group's Final Report was completed in Lusaka prior to departure and transmitted to the Commonwealth Secretary-General on 26 September 2011.