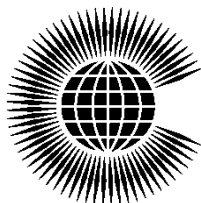


Annex III

Arrival Statement



Commonwealth Observer Group Zambia General Elections 2011

NEWS RELEASE

Arrival Statement by H.E. General Yakubu Gowon Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Kamalesh Sharma, constituted an Observer Group for the 2011 Zambia General Elections following an invitation from the President of Zambia. It is my honour and privilege to have been asked to lead the Group and to be here in Zambia for these important elections. These are Zambia's fifth multi-party elections and we are pleased to be in the country to contribute to the further consolidation of its democracy.

Democracy and good governance are key Commonwealth principles and ones which our Observer Group is constituted to promote and uphold. These elections are crucially important for the people of Zambia, as they elect their representatives for local councils, National Assembly and the Presidency, and it is therefore imperative that the electoral process is transparent, fair and credible.

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 Zambia 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 voter register provides for universal suffrage; state apparatus and public media are impartial; there is a level playing field in the campaign; freedom of expression is provided for; voters are free to express their will; and, the results process is transparent and timely.

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. We will be constructive in our observation and remarks, with the intent to help further strengthen the democratic process in the country.

Our Group has been drawn from across the Commonwealth, and includes politicians, members of election commissions, and representatives of civil society, academia, youth and the media.

In the pre-election period we will meet a wide range of stakeholders, including the 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 a variety of locations around the country to observe the voting, counting and results processes. Our teams will coordinate 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.

For Zambia, the conduct of credible elections is vital and I am hopeful that this will be the case. At this crucial stage of the elections we call on all political parties and stakeholders to adhere to the Electoral Code of Conduct and adopt a constructive approach to the entire electoral process in order to ensure a peaceful poll.

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

Lusaka, 15 September 2011

Note to Editors

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