

COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP TO MALAWI

Statement by Chairperson
Mr Thabo Mbeki, former South African president.

Blantyre, 18 May 2019

The Commonwealth Secretariat was honoured to accept the invitation of the Malawi Electoral Commission to observe the 21 May, 2019 Malawi Tripartite Elections.

The resultant Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) which is now in Malawi is made up of 12 eminent persons drawn from across the different regions of the Commonwealth, including Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Caribbean.

Each observer brings a different perspective. Some of us are politicians, while others have served as election commissioners, worked in the media, on human rights, with some serving as gender and youth advocates.

As we observe the electoral process we will act impartially and independently.

The process of observing elections entails scrutinising their organisation and conduct, which includes assessing the pre-election environment, polling day activities and the post-election period.

As the COG we will do all this, as well as assess whether the elections have been conducted in accordance with the laws of Malawi and the international and regional standards to which Malawi has committed itself.

Since Wednesday we, the COG, have been briefed by a wide range of stakeholders, including the Malawi Electoral Commission, the Malawi Police Service, leaders and representatives of the political parties, civil society organisations, the diplomatic community, women's and youth groups, the media, citizen observers and other International Observer Missions.

We have also been briefed on the technical support the Commonwealth has provided to Malawi in advance of the Tripartite Elections.

In this regard we received updates on the progress following a training workshop for media executives on the implementation of the Media Code of Conduct for fair and balanced reporting on the Elections. We also received a briefing on a Workshop held to empower women candidates in leadership, conflict sensitivity and campaign skills.

Tomorrow, 19 May, our Observers will be deployed across the three regions - located in Blantyre, Thyolo, Zomba, Mangochi, Lilongwe, Salima and Mzuzu. They will work in pairs and will observe the preparations ahead of polling day, and then the opening, voting, closing, and counting on Election Day, as well as the results management processes.

The COG will issue an interim statement on its preliminary findings on 23 May 2019. A final report will then be prepared and submitted to the Commonwealth Secretary-General who will forward it to the Government of Malawi, the Electoral Commission, the leaders of political parties, and thereafter to

all Commonwealth Governments. It would also be made available to the general public.

The COG is aware that this is Malawi's second Tripartite Election and fully appreciates its significance to the people of Malawi. Our presence here affirms the support of the Commonwealth for this country and its democratic processes.

We take this opportunity to wish the people of Malawi peaceful and credible elections whose results should truly represent the will of the people.

We therefore hope that the elections will be conducted in such a manner that its results are accepted by all the contestants, as well as the people of Malawi.

In the event that disputes arise after the announcement of the results, we urge all those concerned to resort to the Courts of the land to resolve such disputes.

The COG conveys its best wishes to the people of Malawi as they prepare to exercise their right to vote on 21 May, thus to continue to play a central role in terms of determining their destiny.