



**Commonwealth Observer Group  
Malawi Parliamentary and Presidential Elections  
19 May 2009**

**NEWS RELEASE**

**Arrival Statement by H.E. John Kufuor**

**Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group**

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Kamalesh Sharma, has constituted an Observer Group for the 2009 Malawi Parliamentary and Presidential Elections, following an invitation from the Malawi Electoral Commission.

It is my honour and privilege to have been asked to lead this Commonwealth Observer Group and be here in Malawi at this time.

Democracy and good governance are core Commonwealth principles and ones which our Observer Group is constituted to promote and uphold. These elections are crucially important for the people of Malawi, as they seek to elect their parliamentary representatives and their President. It is therefore imperative that the electoral process is transparent, fair and ultimately reflects the wishes of the people.

Our task as the Commonwealth Observer Group is to observe and report on relevant aspects of the organisation and conduct of the elections. The Group will 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 Malawi has committed itself, with reference to its own election-related legislation as well as relevant regional, Commonwealth and other international commitments.

In this regard, we will consider, among other things, the transparency of the process; the impartiality of state apparatus and state media; whether voters enjoyed universal suffrage and the right to vote; whether candidates were free to campaign on a level playing field, and if voters were able to express their will free of intimidation and if their will was respected.

In conducting our duties and undertaking our assessment, we will be neutral, impartial, objective and independent. Commonwealth Observers are present here in their individual capacities as eminent Commonwealth citizens. The assessment by the Group will be its own and not that of member governments or of the Commonwealth Secretariat. If we offer any criticism in our reports it will be constructive, with the intent to help further strengthen the democratic process in the country.

The team of Observers come from across the Commonwealth, and includes politicians, current and former members of election commissions, representatives of civil society and the media.

In the lead up to the election we will meet with officials from the Election Commission, representatives of political parties, civil society and media, as well as High Commissions and representatives of other international and domestic observer groups.

Prior to election day, Commonwealth teams will deploy to different parts of the country in the South, Centre and North, to observe the voting, counting and results processes. Our Group will coordinate closely with other international and domestic observer groups before, during and after the poll.

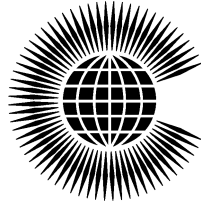
We will issue an Interim Statement after the election and a Final Report upon completion of our duties.

The conduct of peaceful, transparent and credible elections is vital for Malawi and I urge all concerned to meet their responsibilities in this regard. I wish the people of Malawi well and hope that the coming election is one the country will be proud of.

Blantyre, 14 May 2009

**Note to Editors**

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**Composition of the Commonwealth Observer Group for the  
Malawi Parliamentary and Presidential Elections 2009**

**H E MR JOHN KUFUOR (CHAIR)**

Former President, Ghana

**Mr Mahfuz Anam**

Editor & Publisher, The Daily Star, Bangladesh

**Ms Alexandra Devon**

International Governance Consultant, Canada

**Mr David Henry**

Former Chief Electoral Officer, New Zealand

**Dr Jibrin Ibrahim**

Director, Centre for Democracy and Development, Nigeria

**Ms Sheila Kawamara-Mishambi**

Former Member of the East African Parliament, Uganda

**Mr Des McNulty MSP**

Member of the Scottish Parliament, UK

**Mr Malleh Sallah**

Vice Chairman, Independent Electoral Commission, The Gambia

**Ambassador (Mrs) Tabitha Seii**

Chairperson, Education Centre for Women in Democracy, Kenya

**Mr Mohamed Zahid**

Vice President, Human Rights Commission, Maldives