

Commonwealth Observer Group
Mozambique National and Provincial Elections
28 October 2009

NEWS RELEASE

Arrival Statement by HE Dr Ahmad Tejan Kabbah
Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr Kamalesh Sharma, has constituted an Observer Group for the 2009 Mozambique National and Provincial Elections, following an invitation from the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation of Mozambique.

It is my honour and privilege to have been asked to lead this Commonwealth Observer Group and be here in Mozambique at this time for the country's fourth multi-party elections.

Democracy and good governance are core Commonwealth principles and ones which our Observer Group has been constituted to promote and uphold. These elections are crucially important for the people of Mozambique, as they elect their President and National and Provincial Assemblies. 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 Mozambique 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, whether the conditions exist for free and competitive elections; the transparency of the process; participation rights; the impartiality of state apparatus and public 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. If we offer any criticism 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, members of election commissions, an academic and representatives of civil society, youth and the media.

In the pre-election period we will meet with officials from the National Election Commission (CNE), the Electoral Administration Technical Secretariat (STAE), representatives of political parties, civil society and media, as well as High Commissions and representatives of other international and domestic observer groups.

Prior to the election day, Commonwealth teams will deploy to at least eight of the 11 provinces around the country 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.

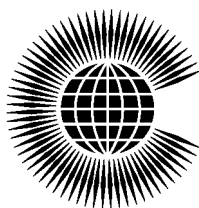
We will issue an Interim Statement after the election but we are aware that the results process will take some time, so our Interim Statement will be a preliminary one on the process up to that point.

The conduct of peaceful, transparent and credible elections is vital for Mozambique and I urge all concerned to meet their responsibilities in this regard. I wish the people of Mozambique well and hope that these elections serve to further strengthen the democratic process in the country.

Maputo, 23 October 2009

Note to Editors

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Composition of the Commonwealth Observer Group

Chair: HE Dr Ahmad Tejan Kabbah

Former President
Sierra Leone

Hon Mrs Sheila Holder MP

Member of Parliament
Guyana

Professor Nazmul Kalimullah

Chairman, National Election Observation Council (JANIPOP)
Bangladesh

Professor Ibrahim Lipumba

National Chairman, Civic United Front
Tanzania

Mr Comfort Mabuza

National Director, Media Institute of Southern Africa
Swaziland

Hon Mrs Akosua Osei-Opare MP

Member of Parliament
Ghana

Hon Mrs Dorothy Pine-McLarty

Member, Election Commission
Jamaica

Mr Elijah Rubvuta

Executive Director, Forum for Democratic Process (FODEP)
Zambia

Dr Andrew Russell

Academic, University of Manchester
UK

Ms Thembi Thadzi

Regional Youth Co-ordinator
Malawi

Datuk Christopher Wan

Member, Election Commission
Malaysia