



Commonwealth Observer Group

Mozambique Parliamentary and Presidential Elections
December 2004

News Release

DEPARTURE STATEMENT BY DR VAUGHAN LEWIS, CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP

The Commonwealth Observer Group completes its work today. Many of us have been here for two weeks, while others have been here for about a month. It has been a privilege to be here to observe the elections and the deepening of the democratic culture in the country.

During our time here we were encouraged to note that most of the campaigning was carried out peacefully and the tenor of the statements made by politicians was measured, as were the reports in the media. However, we also noted the apparent low voter turnout and this is cause for concern. Our mission was not to determine the reasons for this, but we take this opportunity to call on the people of Mozambique to participate in greater numbers in future elections.

Our Observer Group was given two broad objectives. The first was to determine whether conditions existed for a free expression of will by the electors. We believe those conditions did exist. In my interim statement I said that the voting phase of the elections went well and that we came across few serious irregularities. I also said that the counting of the votes at the polling stations took a long time, but was meticulous and transparent and generally in line with procedure. This judgement is reaffirmed by our Observer Group.

The second objective was to determine whether the results of the elections reflected the wishes of the people. However, the collation and tabulation of votes, and the announcement of results at national level is not yet complete as we prepare to depart.

We congratulate the Comissão Nacional de Eleições and its colleague election management bodies for their performance up to this point. We hope that the transparency and credibility that characterised the preparation, campaigning, voting and counting phases of the elections process that we observed will also characterise the rest of the process still taking place as we leave Mozambique. This is a pre-requisite for the credibility of the entire exercise.

Our departure does not signify the end of the Commonwealth presence in Mozambique. A Commonwealth Expert Team will be here to observe the concluding phases of the collation and tabulation of votes at the provincial and national levels. The Team has already arrived and will be in Mozambique until 20 December.

Our presence here was a practical demonstration of the Commonwealth's commitment to engage fully with one of its newer members. Our Report contains recommendations that we hope will further strengthen the democratic culture of Mozambique and the Commonwealth's engagement with this country.

Our report will now be transmitted to the Commonwealth Secretary-General in London, and from there to the Government of Mozambique as well as other interested parties both in Mozambique and throughout the wider Commonwealth. The report will be publicly available.

We wish to thank the Government of Mozambique and the Comissão Nacional de Eleições for inviting us to undertake this Observer mission, and for the cooperation and support extended to us by them during our stay. We also wish to express our thanks to the people of Mozambique for their generosity and openness with us. We are especially grateful to the members of our team of interpreters, drivers, and other staff who contributed to the success of our stay in Mozambique.

Hotel Avenida
Maputo
7 December 2004