



The Commonwealth

Nigeria General Elections 2019

Arrival statement by the

Chair of the Commonwealth Observer Group

H.E Dr. Jakaya Kikwete

Monday, 11 February 2019

I am greatly honoured to have been asked by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC, to lead the Commonwealth Observer Group for Nigeria's General Elections, scheduled for the 16th of February 2019.

Nigeria is a key member of the Commonwealth family. The Commonwealth has had a long tradition of supporting the nation's democratic development through election observation over the past 20 years. In fact, this will be the sixth time a Commonwealth Observer Group will be observing elections in Nigeria, since 1999.

Our Group was constituted following an invitation from the Independent National Election Commission, drawing together 18 eminent persons from across the different regions of the Commonwealth, including Africa, Asia, Europe, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

We come in our own individual capacities, bringing a wide range of expertise in the areas of election administration, political development, law, human rights, civil society, gender, youth, as well as media.

As a group, we are here to observe the organisation and conduct of the election process as a whole, and will form an impartial and independent assessment of its credibility.

The Commonwealth Observer Group will consider the pre-election period, polling day itself, as well as the post-election period. Our main task is to assess whether the elections have been conducted according to the national, regional and international standards to which Nigeria has committed itself, including its own laws.

Most of our members arrived on 8th of February, following an advance group of observers who have been in Nigeria since the 29th of January.

On Election Day, we will observe the opening, voting, closing, counting and the results management processes.

The Commonwealth Observer Group will issue an interim statement on our preliminary findings on the 18th of February. A final report will be submitted to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, and thereafter shared with the Government of Nigeria, INEC, political parties, Commonwealth governments, then made public.

The next few days will be especially critical for the nation, and we hope that our Group's presence will confirm the unwavering solidarity of the Commonwealth with the People of Nigeria as they go into these elections.

We encourage all citizens to play their part in ensuring peaceful and credible elections this weekend.

For more information, or to organise media interviews, please contact:

Josephine Latu-Sanft, Senior Communications Officer

Tel: +44 20 7747 6476

Mob (Nigeria): +234 (0)903 9065536 Twitter @commonwealthsec

Email: j.latu-sanft@commonwealth.int

Note to Editors

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 53 independent and equal sovereign states. It is home to 2.4 billion citizens, of whom 60 per cent are under the age of 30. The Commonwealth includes some of the world's largest, smallest, richest and poorest countries, spanning five regions. Thirty-one of its members are small states, many of them island nations. Commonwealth countries are supported by an active network of more than 80 intergovernmental, civil society, cultural and professional organisations.

Visit www.thecommonwealth.org

The Commonwealth Observer Group is composed of:

His Excellency Jakaya Kikwete, Chairperson - Former President, United Republic of Tanzania

Dr Lesley Clark - Gender Specialist (Australia)

Mr Gary Dunn - Former Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General (Australia)

Mr Omar Jallow - Politician (The Gambia)

Dr Emmanuel Akwetey - Executive Director, Institute of Democratic Governance (IDEG) (Ghana)

Mr Prosper Bani - Politician (Ghana)

Dr Shahabuddin Yaqoob Quraishi - Former Chief Election Commissioner (India)

Mr Orrette Fisher - Elections expert (Jamaica)

Ms Jedidah Waruhiu - Commissioner, Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (Kenya)

Adv. Notemba Tjipueja - Chairperson, Electoral Commission (Namibia)

Dr Eric Kwa - Secretary for Justice (Papua New Guinea)

Mr Ernest Sagaga - Head, Human Rights & Safety, International Federation of Journalists (Rwanda)

Mrs Marcella Samba-Sesay - Chairperson, National Election Watch (NEW) (Sierra Leone)

Ms Crystal Orderson - Regional Director, *The Africa Report* (South Africa)

Ms Joy Napier - Commonwealth Youth & Human Rights Representative (St Kitts & Nevis)

Ms Elizabeth Donnelly - Deputy Head & Research Fellow, Chatham House (United Kingdom)

Ms Linda Duffield - Former diplomat and Chief Executive, Westminster Foundation for Democracy (United Kingdom)

Mr Musa Mwenye - Former Attorney General (Zambia)