

COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA GENERAL ELECTIONS
ARRIVAL STATEMENT
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FORMER CABINET SECRETARY OF KENYA
CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP

4 December 2022

I am honoured to have been invited by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, The Rt. Hon. Patricia Scotland KC, to chair the Commonwealth Observer Group for the General Elections of the Commonwealth of Dominica.

This Group, whose members have been chosen from across the Commonwealth, was constituted at the invitation of the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica, Hon Roosevelt Skerrit, ahead of the elections to be held on Tuesday 6 December.

I am joined by four other eminent persons from across the Commonwealth, with a wealth of experience spanning the social, electoral and political spectrum. We are here to observe the electoral process and will act impartially and independently in accordance with our terms of reference, as we assess its organisation and conduct, in line with international standards for the conduct of international observers.

An advance team has been on the ground since 28 November to observe campaigns and preparations ahead of polls. They will update us, the main COG Group, regarding their meetings with stakeholders and their preliminary findings, which our team will consolidate as we observe the whole process to its end.

We are keenly aware of the importance of elections in a democracy as they are the ultimate expression of a people's will and ability to shape their societies. Casting a vote is a fundamental human right.

While we are here, our mandate is to observe and assess the pre-election environment, the conduct of elections on polling day, and the post-election period against the backdrop of the Commonwealth of Dominica's national legislation and regulations - as well as regional and international commitments.

As is customary, we will report on whether the elections have been conducted to the standards to which the Commonwealth of Dominica has committed itself, including its own laws.

Our planned briefings with relevant stakeholders, already commenced by our advance team, will continue tomorrow [5 December] and will be broad in scope, encompassing updates from the Electoral Commission, the media, citizen groups as well as groups representing women, youth, and persons with disabilities, amongst other key stakeholders.

From Monday 5 December, our observers will be deployed to locations across the country to observe all the preparations ahead of the polling period. On polling day, we will observe the opening, voting, closing, counting, and the results management processes. Throughout, we will meet the police, political party representatives and other local stakeholders.

Our mandate is to observe, and not to interfere with, the process. We will be able to give a more detailed and substantive account of our observations on the whole electoral process on Thursday 8 December, when we will issue a statement on our preliminary findings.

A final report will then subsequently be prepared and submitted to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, and thereafter shared with the government of the Commonwealth of Dominica, relevant stakeholders, and the people of Dominica, as has been the practice following past elections in this country.

I also wish to briefly refer to the technical assistance provided by the Commonwealth Secretariat to the Commonwealth of Dominica, in supporting the review of the legal and administrative framework for the holding of elections in Dominica. This assistance is aligned with the whole-of-electoral cycle approach advocated by the Commonwealth, and the Commonwealth's post-election engagement with stakeholders will be guided by recommendations arising from the Commonwealth Observer Group's report.

We urge stakeholders to make full use of the freedoms that have been granted to them by law, in support of the further development of democratic process, and commit to peaceful elections, consistent with the Commonwealth's values and principles.

The Commonwealth remains committed to supporting the Commonwealth of Dominica in the process of deepening its democracy.

On behalf of the Group, I would like to thank the people of the Commonwealth of Dominica for their participation and allowing us to be a part of this process.

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