

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA GENERAL ELECTIONS
ARRIVAL STATEMENT
HIS EXCELLENCY DANNY FAURE
FORMER PRESIDENT OF SEYCHELLES
CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP

15 January 2023

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 Antigua and Barbuda.

I am leading a group of four other eminent persons, appointed from across the regions of the Commonwealth, with a depth of experience in the political and legal sphere, electoral management and media. We are here, at the invitation of the Antigua and Barbuda Electoral Commission (ABEC), ahead of the elections scheduled to take place on Wednesday 18th of January.

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. Our task is to observe the electoral process, to act independently and impartially, as we assess the pre-elections preparation, the elections itself on polling date, as well as the post-election period. The task we have been given is one we take seriously and will undertake solemnly, in compliance with international standards for the conduct of international observers.

Our planned briefings and engagement with key stakeholders will begin shortly, as we anticipate meeting with political parties, civil society organizations, media representatives, ABEC, citizen observer groups and groups representing women, among others.

Antigua and Barbuda have been a long standing and valued member of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth has provided technical assistance and collaboration on key areas like

Ocean Governance, implementation of the Commonwealth Blue Charter and access to Climate Finance Hub. This assistance is aligned with the whole-of-electoral cycle approach adopted 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.

From Tuesday 17 January, our observers will be deployed 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. During this time, we will also be engaging with political party representatives, the police and other local stakeholders.

Our mandate is to observe, and not to interfere with the process, and we hope to share a detailed account of our observations of the electoral process. On Friday 20th of January, we will issue a statement of our preliminary findings. After that, a final report will then be prepared and submitted to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, and subsequently shared with the government of Antigua and Barbuda, the ABEC, relevant stakeholders, and the public.

The importance of the elections in a democracy as the ultimate expression of the will of the people and cannot be understated. Casting a vote is a fundamental human right and we hope the citizens of Antigua and Barbuda, will keenly exercise this right on elections day.

On behalf of the Group, I would like to thank the people of Antigua and Barbuda for their hospitality and for allowing us to be a part of this process.

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