

*Statement issued by Mrs Janet G. Bostwick
Chair of the Commonwealth Observer Group to the
Antigua and Barbuda 2018 General Election*

20 March 2018

I am honoured to lead the Commonwealth Observer Group to Antigua and Barbuda for the 2018 General Election. I am Mrs Janet G. Bostwick, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Attorney-General of The Bahamas.

Our Group was constituted by the Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland, following an invitation from the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, and includes Mr Hendrick Gappy, former Chairperson of the Electoral Commission of Seychelles, and Ms Linda Duffield, former British Diplomat and former Chief Executive of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

This is the fifth general election in Antigua and Barbuda that the Commonwealth will have observed. Our Terms of Reference are to consider the various factors relating to the credibility of the electoral process as a whole, including election preparations, the campaign environment, the poll, the count, and the declaration of results.

We will assess whether the elections have been conducted according to the national laws of Antigua and Barbuda, and to the relevant regional, Commonwealth and other international standards to which Antigua and Barbuda has committed itself.

During our observation, we will not interfere with the process. We will act with impartiality, objectivity and independence. Each of us has been invited to participate in this assignment in our individual capacities and we do not represent the countries or organisations to which we belong.

Since our arrival on 16 March, we have met with the Prime Minister, the Electoral Commission, representatives of political parties, civil society representatives, including in relation to gender and youth, media organisations and domestic and international observer groups. For the remainder of the time before polling commences we will observe campaigning and continue to meet a range of relevant stakeholders to the election process.

On Wednesday, Election Day, our teams will observe at different polling stations and constituencies across Antigua, including the polling for Barbudans. Our team will observe the opening of the polling stations, the casting of votes, the count and the declaration of results. We will continue to work and consult with observers from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Organization of American States (OAS).

Our Group will issue an Interim Statement of key findings shortly after the declaration of results. Thereafter, and before our departure from Antigua and Barbuda on 26 March, we will prepare our final report. This report of our assessment will be submitted to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, who will in turn forward it to the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, the Leader of the Opposition, the Electoral Commission, leaders of political parties and other stakeholders in Antigua and Barbuda. The report will then be made publicly available throughout the Commonwealth.

On behalf of the Group, I wish the people of Antigua and Barbuda well as they go out on Wednesday 21 March to exercise their franchise.

Halcyon Cove Resort

Antigua

20 March 2018

Note: Copies of the Press Release issued by the Secretariat in London on 19 March outlined the composition of the Group and its Terms of Reference. Copies will be made available.