



The Commonwealth

COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP TO PAKISTAN

Statement by Chair

General Abdulsalami A. Abubakar, former Head of State, Federal Republic of Nigeria

19 July 2018

I am honoured to have been invited by Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, the Rt. Hon Patricia Scotland QC, to lead the Commonwealth Observer Group to Pakistan's General Elections scheduled for 25 July 2018.

The constitution of the Observer Group was welcomed by the Government of Pakistan. It is made up of 14 eminent persons drawn from across the Commonwealth, including representatives from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Pacific. The Group arrived on 18 July and will stay in Pakistan until 30 July.

The observers bring a wealth of experience from across the social and political spectrum, issues, including on electoral and political processes, civil society, human rights, gender and youth issues, and media.

The Commonwealth has always taken great interest in the general elections of Pakistan, and the Group notes that Pakistan has undertaken significant electoral reforms since the 2013 General Elections. This has resulted in a new Elections Act, adopted in 2017, which addresses several of the recommendations made by previous Commonwealth Observer Groups.

As independent observers, our mandate is to consider the various factors impinging on the credibility of the electoral process and report on whether it has been conducted to the national, regional, Commonwealth and international standards to which Pakistan has committed itself.

Over the next three days, we will have a wide-ranging set of briefings from the Election Commission of Pakistan and local stakeholders, from political parties to citizen observers and media representatives.

On 23 July, observers will be deployed to eight locations, where we will observe preparations ahead of polling day in small teams. On Election Day, we will observe opening, voting, closing, counting and the management of results.

An Interim Statement on our preliminary findings will be issued on 27 July. The final report will then be prepared and submitted to the Secretary-General, who will share it with the Government of Pakistan, the Election Commission, leaders of the political parties and thereafter to all Commonwealth governments. It will also be made available to the public.

We are aware of the significance of these elections to the people of Pakistan. Our presence here affirms the Commonwealth's support to the country and its democratic processes, and we will perform our role with impartiality, independence and transparency.

We urge citizens, particularly women and youth, to participate in this election, and all stakeholders to play their part in ensuring peaceful and credible elections.

On behalf of the Group, I wish the people of Pakistan well as they prepare to exercise their democratic right to vote. /

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

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Note to Editors

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