



## The Commonwealth

### **Arrival Statement by the Chair of the Commonwealth Observer Group, Mrs Mmasekgoa Masire-Mwamba**

*Former Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General, Mrs Mmasekgoa Masire-Mwamba, arrives in Maseru to lead the Commonwealth Observer Group to Lesotho's National Assembly Elections, scheduled for 3 June 2017.*

Our Commonwealth Observer Group was constituted by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC, following an invitation from the Independent Electoral Commission of Lesotho, and is composed of experts with a varied range of backgrounds, including governance, peace and security, electoral administration, human rights and law. I am honoured to have been asked to lead this Group, and will be supported by three officials from the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Our Group began arriving in Lesotho from 27 May and have also had the opportunity to observe the pre-election environment and advance voting. We will remain in the country until 8 June 2017.

Our Group wishes to extend its sincere appreciation to the people of Lesotho and all stakeholders for the warm welcome and the hospitality shown to us. We are grateful for the willingness of various stakeholders to meet with us and for their readiness to assist us as we undertake our mandate to observe the elections.

Our task as the Commonwealth Observer Group is to consider all the factors, to our knowledge, that would impact the credibility of the electoral process as a whole. We will act impartially and independently as we scrutinise its organisation and conduct. We will seek to assess the pre-election environment, polling day activities and the post-election period against the backdrop of Lesotho's national legislation, regional and international commitments. We will then take a view as to whether the process has been conducted to the international, Commonwealth and regional standards to which Lesotho has committed itself, including its own laws.

We wish to commend all the political parties for reaffirming their commitment to peaceful, inclusive elections through a peace pledge, which they signed earlier this month.

Our presence at this time will consider, among other things, the general preparedness of the country's electoral systems and processes - including whether there is a level playing field that allows all political parties and all candidates to take their campaigns to the Basotho people; whether the voter register was compiled in such a way that all eligible voters who chose to register to vote had the ability to do so; and whether sufficiently robust mechanisms exist to ensure the integrity of the register. Additionally, we will consider whether the state apparatus and public media are impartial; whether freedom of expression is provided for;



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whether voters are free to express their will; and whether the results process is transparent and timely.

The Group will engage with key players and receive briefings from the Independent Electoral Commission, political parties and local stakeholders; including citizen observers, women's groups and youth. We will also be consulting with the diplomatic community and other international observer missions during our observations.

From Thursday 1 June, our Observers will be deployed to different parts of the country. They will be in small teams and will arrive to observe preparations ahead of polling day and meet with political parties, the police, election officials and other stakeholders. On Election Day, they will observe the opening, voting, closing, counting and the results management processes.

We will issue an Interim Statement on our preliminary findings on 5 June 2017. A final report will then be prepared and submitted to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, and subsequently shared with relevant stakeholders and the public.

The Group will leave Lesotho on 8 June 2017. We are aware of the significance of these elections to the people of Lesotho and hope that our presence here affirms the support of the Commonwealth to the country and its democratic processes.

On behalf of the Group, I wish the people of Lesotho well as they go out on 3 June to exercise their franchise in conditions of peace.

### Note to Editors:

The Commonwealth Observer Group will function impartially and independently and will conduct itself according to the standards expressed in the International Declaration of Principles for Election Observation. The four Commonwealth Observers will be in Lesotho from 27 May to 8 June 2017.

### *The Commonwealth Observer Group members are:*

Mrs Mmasekgoa Masire-Mwamba (Chairperson)  
Former Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General  
**Botswana**

Mr Kenneth Abotsi  
Electoral Affairs and Conflict Resolution Expert  
**Ghana**

Ms Lomcebo Dlamini  
Human Rights Lawyer  
**Swaziland**



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Mr Peter Wardle  
Former Chief Executive  
The Electoral Commission  
**United Kingdom**

The Commonwealth Observer Group is supported by Mr Linford Andrews, Mr Mark Guthrie and Ms Hilary McEwan from the Commonwealth Secretariat.

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