



COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP IN ZIMBABWE

Arrival Statement by the Chair,

John Dramani Mahama, former President, Republic of Ghana

25 July 2018

I am honoured to have been invited by the Secretary-General, the Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC., to lead the Commonwealth Observer Group for the general elections that will take place in Zimbabwe on 30 July.

The Observer Group constituted by the Commonwealth Secretary-General consists of 23 eminent people from across the Commonwealth, including representatives from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Pacific. We are here until 6 August at the invitation of the Government of Zimbabwe.

The observers have a great depth of knowledge and experience - not only of electoral and political processes, but of civil society, human rights, gender, media and youth issues.

The Commonwealth last observed elections in Zimbabwe in 2002. The first election it observed in this country was in 1980.

As independent observers, our mandate is to consider factors that affect the credibility of the electoral process and report on whether the vote has been conducted according to the national, regional, and international standards to which Zimbabwe has committed itself. We will perform our role with impartiality, independence and transparency.

It was here in Harare, in 1991, that Commonwealth Heads of Government issued a seminal declaration committing their countries to a set of principles, including democracy, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, just and honest government; and fundamental human rights.

It is noteworthy that, for the first time in Zimbabwe's electoral history, women are among the presidential candidates: four are standing for election.

The Commonwealth Observer Group urges citizens, particularly women and youth, to participate in this election, and all stakeholders to play their part in ensuring a peaceful and credible process.

Over the next three days, we will consult a wide-range of election stakeholders including, the Zimbabwe Election Commission, political parties, citizen observers, civil society and media representatives.



On 28 July, I will deploy observers to ten provinces, where they will observe preparations ahead of the vote. On election day, they will observe the opening of polls, voting, closing of polls, counting of votes and the tabulation of results.

We will issue a Statement of our preliminary findings following the elections.

The final report will then be prepared and submitted to the Secretary-General, who will share it with the Government of Zimbabwe, leaders of political parties, the Zimbabwe Election Commission, and thereafter to all Commonwealth governments. It will also be made available to the public.

The final report will be considered in the Commonwealth Secretary-General's assessment of Zimbabwe's interest in being readmitted to the organisation.

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

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

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Note to Editors

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 53 independent and equal sovereign states. It is home to 2.4 billion citizens, of whom 60 per cent are under the age of 30. The Commonwealth includes some of the world's largest, smallest, richest and poorest countries, spanning five regions. 31 of its members are small states, many of them island nations.

Also important to note that the members of the Commonwealth Observer Group are selected in their individual capacity and are independent of the Commonwealth's 53 member countries.

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