

Introduction

Zanzibar's recent history has been characterised by political polarisation, tension and turbulence, marking 'the Isles' out from the rest of the United Republic of Tanzania. The period since the 1995 elections has been particularly difficult, with the opposition alleging electoral fraud and the manipulation of the results at those elections, refusing to accept the results of the elections for the Zanzibar Presidency and House of Representatives, declaring its lack of confidence in the Zanzibar Electoral Commission and for some time declining to attend parliament.

During the same period there has been a particularly close association with the Commonwealth. Commonwealth election observers were present for the 1995 elections in Zanzibar. Commonwealth 'behind the scenes' diplomacy was begun shortly after those elections in an effort to assist in the creation of conditions in which the two main parties – Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) and Civic United Front (CUF) – and their supporters would in future have confidence in political and electoral arrangements. Commonwealth election experts visited following the June 1999 agreement between the two main political parties, to assist in the implementation of that agreement. Well into 2000, as the initial optimism occasioned by the June agreement faded, the Commonwealth Secretary-General continued to promote dialogue and consensus.

It was against this background that the Secretary-General decided to respond positively to the invitations from the National Electoral Commission of the United Republic of Tanzania and the Zanzibar Electoral Commission to observe the October 2000 elections. These elections were for:

- President of the United Republic of Tanzania;
- National Assembly of the United Republic of Tanzania;
- President of Zanzibar;
- House of Representatives, Zanzibar; and
- local councils.

An Assessment Team of Commonwealth Secretariat officials, which visited Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar in August 2000, established that there was broad support in Zanzibar for the presence of a Commonwealth Observer Group. On 29 September the Secretary-General announced that an Advance Group of two Commonwealth Observers would begin work in Zanzibar on 2 October and that our full Commonwealth Observer Group of seven observers and five Secretariat support staff would arrive on 23 October. The full Group would be present for the final days of the campaign and the five elections which would take place on 29 October.

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The Observer Group and its Terms of Reference

This was the 31st Observer Group to be constituted by the Commonwealth Secretary-General since October 1989, when Commonwealth Heads of Government agreed that election observation could help to strengthen democratic institutions and processes in member countries. Heads of

Government reinforced the Commonwealth's democratic vocation two years later, and set the context for the activities of Commonwealth observers, when they adopted the 1991 Harare Commonwealth Declaration to promote "democracy, human rights, the rule of law and just and honest government".

The terms of reference for our Group were as follows:

The Group is established by the Commonwealth Secretary-General at the request of the Tanzania National Electoral Commission and the Zanzibar Electoral Commission. It is to observe relevant aspects of the organisation and conduct of the elections scheduled to take place in Zanzibar on 29 October 2000, in accordance with the laws of Tanzania and Zanzibar. It is to consider the various factors impinging on the credibility of the electoral process as a whole and to determine in its own judgement whether the conditions exist for a free expression of will by the electors and if the results of the elections reflect the wishes of the people.

The Group is to act impartially and independently. It has no executive role; its function is not to supervise but to observe the process as a whole and to form a judgement accordingly. It would also be free to propose to the authorities concerned such action on institutional, procedural and other matters as would assist the holding of such elections.

The Group is to submit its report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, who will forward it to the Government of Tanzania, the National Electoral Commission and the Zanzibar Electoral Commission, the leadership of the political parties taking part in the elections and thereafter to all Commonwealth governments.

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The Group would form an independent judgement which would in no way represent either the views of any government, the Office of the Secretary-General or any organisation
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Within the above terms of reference the Group would form an independent judgement which would in no way represent either the views of any government, the Office of the Secretary-General or any organisation to which its members may belong.

The Group was chaired by Dr Gaositwe Chiepe, former Foreign Minister of Botswana. The Commonwealth Secretariat staff support team was led by Mr Carl Dundas, Special Adviser in the Economic and Legal Advisory Services Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat. The composition of the Group is shown at Annex I.

Method of Work

The Advance Group of Commonwealth Observers

Two Commonwealth Observers – Guyanese parliamentarian Dr Rupert Roopnaraine and United Kingdom election expert Nigel Buttler – arrived in Zanzibar on Monday, 2 October, as an 'Advance Group' supported by a Commonwealth Secretariat staff member. During the course of the following two weeks the Advance Group was deliberately highly visible, travelling widely on both the main islands that comprise Zanzibar (Unguja and Pemba), in a vehicle identified by special Commonwealth stickers, and making a point of being present on the fringes of political rallies by both the main political parties. The Advance Group was told on several occasions that its presence – in general, and at the rallies in particular – had helped to improve the political atmosphere.

Wherever it went the Advance Group met the electors, saw the preparations for the elections, monitored the media coverage and observed campaign activities. While not present for voter registration, which ended on 21 August, the Advance Group was briefed on the process and participants' views on its conduct and saw the display of the Provisional Voters' List at constituency centres. The members of the Advance Group met a number of times with senior representatives of the Zanzibar Electoral Commission and representatives of all the political parties and the domestic observers of the Tanzania Election Monitoring Committee (TEMCO).

The Advance Group constituted not only an external – and specifically Commonwealth – presence at a crucial stage in the electoral process. It was also able to collect a considerable amount of information concerning, and to develop some insight into, the situation in Zanzibar immediately prior to the elections.

Arrival of the full Commonwealth Observer Group

The Advance Group briefed the full Observer Group when it assembled in Dar es Salaam on Thursday, 20 October. The full Group also met representatives of the National Electoral Commission, the police, media monitoring organisations, women's groups, domestic election observers, other international observers and Commonwealth High Commissioners or their representatives. Several observers, wearing Group T-shirts and hats and displaying the Group's car stickers, appeared on state-run Television Tanzania (TVT) in order to advertise the presence of the Group and thereby to ensure 'voter recognition'.

Three days later, on 23 October, the Group arrived in Zanzibar and held a press conference at which the Chairperson read an Arrival Statement (see *Annex II*). This was followed by a further series of briefings by, among others, senior representatives of the Zanzibar Electoral Commission, the police and the political parties. (A schedule of our engagements is at *Annex III*.)

On Wednesday, 25 October we divided into five teams of two persons each and began our observation on Unguja. The following day two of these teams moved to Pemba while the Chairperson, the Secretariat team leader and the two other teams remained in Unguja. Each team travelled widely in both urban and rural areas, familiarising themselves with their areas of deployment, observing the closing stages of the campaign and meeting members of the public, election officials, candidates, community leaders and others in an effort to assess first hand the state of electoral preparedness and the political climate in the run-up to the elections. We attended party press conferences, rallies and meetings, observed the training of polling officials and party agents and submitted daily reports of our observations to the Chairperson. Before voting day we covered all the constituencies on Unguja and most of those on Pemba. A sixth one-person team was added the day before polling day. (Details of our deployment are given at *Annex IV*.)

On polling day itself, 29 October, we observed voting at 226 polling stations, using observation notes and check lists prepared by the Secretariat (see *Annex V*). After the polls closed we were present for several stages of 17 of the counts (since several took place at each counting centre). Given the cancellation of

the elections in 16 constituencies on Sunday night, 29 October, some of our teams were unable to be present at any count. Our Chairperson issued an Interim Statement at 10.40 a.m. on 30 October 2000. (A copy of this statement is at *Annex VI*.) The Group then met for a debriefing.

The Chairperson issued a Departure Statement on 3 November 2000 (see *Annex VII*). This Report was prepared prior to our departure and forwarded to the Commonwealth Secretary-General.