

Annex 2

Arrival Statement



Commonwealth Observer Group Papua New Guinea National Elections 2012

NEWS RELEASE

Arrival Statement by Hon. Edward Natapei MP Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Kamallesh Sharma, constituted an Observer Group for the 2012 Papua New Guinea National Elections following an invitation from the Government of Papua New Guinea. It is my honour and privilege to have been asked to lead the Group and to be here in the country for these important elections.

The Commonwealth has a tradition of observing elections in Papua New Guinea since 1992, and we are pleased to be here this year to contribute to the further strengthening of PNG's democracy.

Democracy and good governance are key Commonwealth principles and ones which our Observer Group is constituted to promote and uphold. These elections are crucially important for the people of Papua New Guinea, as they elect their representatives, and it is imperative that the electoral process is transparent, fair, credible, and free of violence.

Our task as the Commonwealth Observer Group is to consider all the factors affecting the credibility of the electoral process as a whole, and assess whether the elections have been conducted according to the standards for democratic elections to which Papua New Guinea has committed itself, with reference to its own election-related legislation as well as relevant regional, Commonwealth and other international Conventions and Declarations.

We will consider, among other things, whether conditions exist for free and competitive elections; the voter register provides for universal suffrage; there is a level playing field in the campaign; state apparatus and public media are impartial; freedom of expression is

provided for and the media meets its responsibilities for honest and balanced reporting; voters are free to express their will; the secret ballot is respected; and the results process is transparent and timely.

In conducting our duties and undertaking our assessment, we will be impartial, objective and independent. We are here in our individual capacities as eminent Commonwealth citizens. The assessment of the Group will be its own, and not that of any member government. We will be constructive in our observation and remarks, with the intent to help further strengthen the democratic process in Papua New Guinea.

Our Group has been drawn from across the Commonwealth, and includes politicians, members of election commissions, and representatives of civil society and the media.

In the pre-election period we are meeting a wide range of stakeholders, including the PNG Electoral Commission and Integrity Commission, representatives of political parties, civil society and the international community. We are also in touch with the other international and national observer groups to share information and coordinate our respective efforts.

During the polling period, Commonwealth teams will deploy to a variety of locations around the country to observe the voting, counting and results processes. Our teams will coordinate with other observers in the field in order to maximise our overview of the process. We will issue an Interim Statement after the election and a final report at a later stage.

For Papua New Guinea, the conduct of credible elections is vital, and has become even more critical to the country's future following the constitutional crisis and political uncertainty of recent months. We call on all political parties and stakeholders to play their roles responsibly and to adopt a constructive approach to the entire electoral process, in order to ensure a peaceful and successful poll.

I wish the people of Papua New Guinea well and pledge the unwavering solidarity of the Commonwealth as you go into these important elections.

Port Moresby, 19 June 2012 48