

Chapter 1

Introduction

At the invitation of the Minister of External Relations of Cameroon, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr Kamalesh Sharma, constituted an Expert Team for the 2011 Cameroon Presidential Election. The Team was led by Mr Frederick Mitchell MP, Former Foreign Minister of The Bahamas, and comprised six experts in total. The Expert Team was supported by a four-member staff team from the Commonwealth Secretariat (see Annex 1 for press release and biographies of the Team).

Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for the Team were as follows:

'The Team will conduct an analysis of the general conduct and framework for the elections, considering the preparations as well as the polling, counting and results, and the overall electoral environment. The Team is expected to meet with relevant national and international stakeholders, notably government bodies responsible for organising the elections, representatives of political parties, civil society and the diplomatic corps.

The Team is to act impartially and independently. It has no executive role; its function is not to supervise but to observe the process to the extent possible and to assess whether it has been conducted according to the standards for democratic elections to which Cameroon has committed itself, with reference to national election-related legislation and relevant regional, Commonwealth and other international commitments. The Team is to submit its report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General.'

Activities

The Expert Team was present in Cameroon from 3 October 2011. During four days of briefings, the Team met with Elections Cameroon (ELECAM), political party representatives, civil society groups, media, Commonwealth High Commissioners, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Cameroon and international and domestic observer groups.

The Expert Team was deployed around the country from 7 October, reporting from five regions: Centre, Littoral, North West, Extreme North and East (see Annex 2). During the deployment phase, experts met with election officials and polling staff at the council, divisional and regional levels. Observers also met security officials, political party representatives, domestic and international observers during deployment.

On the basis of the Team's findings, the Chairperson issued a post-election Press Release on 12 October 2011 (Annex 3). The Team's Report was completed in Yaoundé and thereafter transmitted to the Commonwealth Secretary-General.