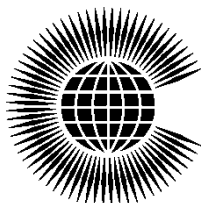


Annex 3

Arrival Statement



Commonwealth Observer Group Guyana National and Regional Elections 2011

NEWS RELEASE

Arrival Statement by Hon. Denis Marshall QSO Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Kamallesh Sharma, constituted an Observer Group for the 2011 Guyana National and Regional Elections following an invitation from the Government of Guyana. 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 long tradition of support for elections in Guyana, including observing its national polls since 1992, and we are pleased to be in the country to contribute to the further consolidation of its 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 Guyana, as they elect their representatives, and it is therefore 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 Guyana has committed itself, with reference to its own election-related legislation as well as relevant regional, Commonwealth and other international commitments.

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; 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 the country.

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 will meet a wide range of stakeholders, including GECOM, representatives of political parties, civil society and media, as well as High Commissions and representatives of other international and national observer groups.

Prior to election day, 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 Guyana, the conduct of credible elections, building on the improvements reported in 2006, is vital and I am hopeful that this will be the case. 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 poll.

I wish the people of Guyana well and pledge the unwavering solidarity of the Commonwealth as you go into these elections.

Georgetown, 23 November 2011