

Annex 7

Departure Statement by Dr Bakili Muluzi



Commonwealth Observer Group Chair's departure statement following Lesotho elections

1 June 2012

Since 19 May 2012 when the Commonwealth Observer Group, which I am delighted to have been leading, arrived in the Kingdom of Lesotho, our main objective has been to make a contribution to the strengthening of democracy in the country through observing the electoral process — before, during and after the polls.

I mentioned during our Arrival and Interim statements that an election is a process, and often the election day goes without incident, but it is usually the post-election period which raises issues.

The people of Lesotho went to the polls on 26 May 2012 and made their will known through the ballot. But from the results announced, it is clear no single political party garnered enough seats to form a government alone. This, as we all know, calls for the formation of a coalition government in the coming days. This is most critical, as it is a new terrain for the country.

I have constantly emphasised the need for a smooth, peaceful and credible transition. The first step is the election of a Speaker in the new parliament. This is the first time the parliament has to deal with a situation where no one party has an absolute majority and therefore a coalition of parties will form the next government.

The party or parties that have a majority will need to be tested by the Speaker when parliament resumes.

I have asked the stakeholders, particularly the political party leaders, to guarantee that parties will be given an opportunity to nominate a speaker if they wish. This process needs to be fair and impartial to all parties.

Once all nominees are identified parliament can then vote for the Speaker who has the

confidence of the majority of the elected representatives. There must be no attempt to frustrate this process by any procedural means.

I depart the Kingdom of Lesotho with the fervent hope that the assurances stakeholders gave that the transition process will be credible will be followed through, so that the will of the people is respected — and thereby consolidating the democratic gains the Kingdom has made to date.

Though the Commonwealth Observer Group now departs, I wish to reassure the people of Lesotho of the Commonwealth's ongoing engagement and readiness to support Lesotho as it continues on this path.

Maseru, Lesotho, 1 June 2012

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