

## **ANNEX III: Arrival Statement**



### **Commonwealth Observer Group**

#### **Uganda Presidential and Parliamentary Elections 2011**

#### **NEWS RELEASE**

#### **Arrival Statement by Dame Billie Miller Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group**

Commonwealth Secretary-General Kamalesh Sharma constituted an Observer Group for the 2011 Uganda Presidential and Parliamentary Elections, following an invitation from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uganda.

It is therefore my pleasure and privilege to have been asked to lead this Commonwealth Observer Group and to be here in Uganda for these important elections. The Commonwealth was present for the first multi-party election in the country in 2006 and we are pleased to honour the invitation to observe these elections.

As Uganda continues to consolidate its multi-party democracy, the Commonwealth hopes to see further improvements in the country's electoral process. It is imperative that the electoral process is transparent, fair and credible.

Democracy and good governance are core Commonwealth principles which our Group promotes and upholds.

Our task as the Commonwealth Observer Group is to observe and report on relevant aspects of the organisation and conduct of the elections and also on the environment in which the elections are held.

We will consider all the factors impinging on 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 Uganda has committed itself, with reference to its own election-related legislation as well as relevant regional, Commonwealth and other international commitments.

We will consider whether conditions exist for free and competitive elections; the voter register provides for universal suffrage; state apparatus and public media are impartial;

there is fairness in the campaign and conduct of the process; freedom of expression is provided for; voters are free to express their will; and, the results process is transparent.

We will be impartial, objective and independent. We are present here in our individual capacities as eminent Commonwealth citizens. The assessment by the Group will be its own and not that of any Commonwealth member government. Our views, comments and observations will be constructive, with the intent to help further strengthen the democratic process in Uganda.

The team of Observers comes from across the Commonwealth, and includes former politicians, members of election commissions, and representatives of civil society, academia and the media.

In the pre-election period we are meeting a wide range of stakeholders, including the Electoral Commission, representatives of political parties, civil society, the police 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. We will issue an Interim Statement after the election and a final report at a later stage.

Following the 2006 election, the Commonwealth team called for a substantial improvement in the electoral environment that was marred by irregularities and shortcomings. We will reflect on how far those concerns have been addressed. This is an election in which Uganda can show that its transition to a multi-party democracy is complete.

I wish the people of Uganda well and hope that these elections serve to strengthen the democratic process in the country.

Kampala, 14 February 2011

***Note to Editors***

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