

**ARRIVAL STATEMENT  
BY THE CHAIR OF  
COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP TO THE  
COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS**

**Statement by HE Bruce Golding  
Former Prime Minister of Jamaica  
Nassau, 11 September 2021**

Following an invitation from the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Sir Cornelius A Smith, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC, has constituted an Observer Group to the General Elections, scheduled for 16 September 2021. It is my honour and privilege to have been asked to lead the Group, and to be here in the country for these elections.

Our eight-member Observer Group has been drawn from across the Commonwealth and brings together a wealth of experience spanning the social and political spectrum including civil society, and the media. The Group is supported by a staff team of six, led by Linford Andrews, Head of the Electoral Support Section at the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The Commonwealth also observed the 2017 General Elections in The Bahamas.

Some of our observers arrived in Nassau earlier and have been at various locations observing the final stages and close of the advance polling, which took place on 9 September 2021.

We recognise the significance of these elections to the people of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, the region and the global community - and appreciate the challenges they present, especially at a time when the world is battling the coronavirus pandemic.

Our mandate is to observe and evaluate the pre-election environment, polling day activities and the post-election period, against the backdrop of Bahamian national legislation and regulations, as well as regional and

international commitments. We will then report on whether the elections have been conducted in accordance with the standards to which The Commonwealth of The Bahamas has committed itself, including its own laws.

We will consider, among other things, whether conditions exist for credible elections, including a fair election environment; whether public media has been impartial; the transparency of the entire process; whether voters are free to express their will; and whether the counting and results process is transparent.

In conducting our duties and undertaking our assessment, we will be neutral, impartial, objective and independent. The Group has no executive role; its function is not to interfere with, but to observe the process as a whole and to give recommendations accordingly. We are here in our individual capacities as eminent and experienced Commonwealth citizens. The assessment by the Group will be its own and not that of any member government.

Over the coming days we will be meeting stakeholders including the government, political parties, civil society groups, international observer groups, and the media. From 14 September we will deploy our observers in small teams across various islands to observe the voting, counting and results process, as well as meet with other stakeholders in respective locations.

On Election Day they will observe the opening, voting, closing, counting and the results management processes. We will issue an interim statement on our preliminary findings on 18 September 2021. A final report will then be prepared and submitted to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, and subsequently shared with relevant stakeholders and made publicly available.

Our presence here affirms the support of the Commonwealth to this country and its democratic processes, and we hope that our Group's presence will confirm the Commonwealth's solidarity with the Bahamian people.

The Group will depart The Commonwealth of the Bahamas by 23 September 2021.

On behalf of the Commonwealth Observer Group, I wish the people of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas well as they embark upon this

election. We encourage all Bahamians to do their part to ensure that a peaceful and credible process takes place on 16 September.

Full composition of the Commonwealth Observer Group:

The Hon Bruce Golding (Chairperson)

Former Prime Minister of Jamaica

Josephine Tamai

Chief Elections Officer

Belize

Ian Michael Anthony

Chief Elections Officer

Dominica

Tyrone Buckmire

Civil Society Expert

Grenada

Dr Asha Kissoon

Leader, Movement Party

Guyana

Erick Okong'o Mogeni

Senator

Kenya

Eno Jonathan Ovuorho  
Communications and Media Expert  
Nigeria

Mark Stephens CBE  
Lawyer  
United Kingdom