



The Commonwealth

**ARRIVAL STATEMENT
BY Dr EMMANUEL UGIRASHEBUJA
FORMER PRESIDENT - EAST AFRICAN COURT OF JUSTICE
CHAIR OF THE
COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP TO THE
2020 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN GHANA**

*5 December 2020
Accra, Ghana*

Statement by: Chair of the Commonwealth Observer Group, Dr Emmanuel Ugirashebuja, former president of the East African Court of Justice.

I am honoured to have been asked by Commonwealth Secretary-General, The Rt Honourable Patricia Scotland QC, to Chair the Commonwealth Observer Group to Ghana's General Elections scheduled for 7 December 2020.

The Group was constituted following an invitation from Ghana's Electoral Commission. It is made up of 5 eminent persons drawn from across the Commonwealth bringing wealth of experience from across the social and political spectrum including political representation, electoral administration, rule of law and justice, civil society, as well as women's matters.

Our presence here affirms the support of the Commonwealth to Ghana and its democratic processes.

We recognise the significance of these elections to the people of Ghana and appreciate the challenges it comes with as the world battles the Coronavirus pandemic. These elections are also the first to which the Commonwealth Secretariat has sent an observer group to since the start of the pandemic.

We are here to observe the electoral process and will act impartially and independently as we scrutinise its organisation and conduct. We will seek to assess the pre-election environment, polling day activities and the post-election period.

We will then take a view as to whether it has been conducted to the international and regional standards to which Ghana has committed itself, including its own laws.

Our planned briefings are wide ranging, encompassing the Electoral Commission, political leaders, political parties, media and other local stakeholders including representatives from civil society, religious bodies as well as women's and youth groups.

So far, the Group has already met with the electoral commission, civil societies, and police, as well as youth representatives.

On 7 December, our Observers will be deployed to polling stations. They will be in pairs and will arrive early to observe the opening, voting, closing, counting and the results management processes.

We will issue an interim statement on our preliminary findings on 9 December 2020. A final report will then be prepared and submitted to the Secretary-General, who will forward it to the Government of Ghana, the Electoral Commission, leaders of political parties, and thereafter to all Commonwealth Governments. It will also be made available to members of the public.

On behalf of the Group, I wish the people of Ghana well, as they go out on Monday to exercise their right to vote in peace.

The Commonwealth Observer Group members are:

Chairperson

Dr Emmanuel Ugirashebuja

Former President of the East African Court

Rwanda

Musa Mwenye, SC

Former Attorney General

Zambia

Baroness Denise Patricia Kingsmill

Member of the House of Lords

United Kingdom

Marcella Samba-Sesay

Chairperson National Election Watch (New)

Sierra Leone

Hon Martha Karua

Former Minister of Justice

Kenya

ENDS

Note to Editors:

The Commonwealth Observer Group will function impartially and independently and will conduct itself according to the standards expressed in the International Declaration of Principles for Election Observation.

The Group is supported by a staff team of five persons from the Commonwealth Secretariat, led by Prof Luis Franceschi Senior Director of the Governance and Peace Directorate.

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 53 independent and equal sovereign states. It is home to 2.4 billion citizens, of whom 60 per cent are under the age of 30. The Commonwealth includes some of the world's largest, smallest, richest and poorest countries, spanning five regions. 31 of its members are small states, many of them island nations. Commonwealth countries are supported by an active network of more than 80 intergovernmental, civil societies, cultural and professional organisations.

The Commonwealth Observers will be in Ghana until 11 December.

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