40 Years of Commonwealth Election Observation: Evolving, Responding, Innovating

Expert Forums

2020 marks 40 years of Commonwealth Election Observation. This milestone presents a unique opportunity to review and commemorate the Commonwealth’s work in international election observation and how it contributes to the promotion of democracy in member countries.

Join us for this four-part series where leading experts from around the Commonwealth delve into the key trends and current challenges to elections and international election observation.

Expert Forum I
Challenges to Contemporary International Election Observation

23 September 2020, 3:00 pm BST

This forum will consider core criticisms of international election observation, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and opportunities for strengthening observation for the future.

Confirmed Speakers

Cynthia Barrow-Giles
Senior Lecturer in Political Science, University of the West Indies, Barbados

Chris Cobb
Vice President, Commonwealth Journalist Association, Canada

Patrick Merloe
Senior Associate and Director for Election Programmes, National Democratic Institute

Regina Opondo
Community Director of Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI) and Chair of the Elections Observation Group (ELOG), Kenya

Marcella Samba-Sesay
Chairperson, National Election Watch, Sierra Leone

Moderator: Dr Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu
Executive Director, Centre for Policy Alternatives, Sri Lanka
Expert Forum II
Examining Trends: Representation and Inclusion

30 September 2020, 9:00 am BST

This forum will explore trends and gaps and leverage Commonwealth good practice to contribute to the aspirations of SDG 16.

Confirmed Speakers

Susan Grey
Executive Director, femLiNKpacific, Fiji

Terry Dale Ince
Managing Director of TDI & Associates and Founder of the CEDAW Committee of Trinidad and Tobago (CCoTT)

Samson Itodo
Founder and Executive Director, Yiaga Africa, Nigeria

Ahmed Mohamed
Chairperson, Maldives Association of Persons with Disabilities

Moderator: The Hon Maryan Street
Former Minister of Housing, New Zealand

Expert Forum III
Rule of Law, Conflict Sensitivity and Elections

8 October 2020, 3:00 pm BST

Speakers will discuss the importance of strategic and holistic approaches to mitigating conflict around the electoral space to promote credible elections and peaceful transitions.

Confirmed Speakers

Justice James Munange Ogoola
Principal Judge Emeritus, Uganda

Eamon Courtenay
Senior Counsel and Former Foreign Minister, Belize

Radhika Coomaraswamy
Former Under-Secretary-General of the

United Nations, Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict

Dr Asha Kissoon
Leader of The New Movement Party, Guyana

Robert Phiri
Executive Director, Malawi Public Affairs Committee

Moderator: Dr Hume Johnson
Political Scholar and Professor of Public Relations, Roger Williams University
Expert Forum IV
Electoral Technologies and Social Media: Trust and Truth in the Digital Age

21 October 2020, 2:00 pm BST

This forum will explore the impact of election technologies on citizens’ trust in electoral processes, and the challenges and opportunities associated with them. It will also consider the impact of social media on elections, as well as the impact of disinformation and hate speech on political inclusion and participation.

Confirmed Speakers

Dr Kushal Pathak
Director, ICT, Election Commission of India

Melanie du Plessis
Manager Business Systems, Electoral Commission of South Africa

Senator the Hon Matthew Samuda
Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of National Security, Jamaica

Akua Gyekye
Public Policy Manager, Africa and MENA Elections, Facebook

Senel Wanniarachchi
Co-Founder, Hashtag Generation, Sri Lanka

Moderator: Michael Meyer-Resende
Executive Director, Democracy Reporting International

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