



Commonwealth announces Group to observe Malawi elections / Former Ghana President Kufuor to lead Group

LILONGWE, Malawi, May 9, 2009/ABC Television-Africa (ABC-Africa)/ — A Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) will be present during Malawi's general elections due to be held on 19 May 2009. The COG will be led by former Ghana President John Kufuor.

The Group was constituted by the Commonwealth Secretary-General at the invitation of the Malawi Electoral Commission.

“This is an important election and provides the people of Malawi with an opportunity to consolidate the democratic gains they have made since the end of one-party rule in 1994”, the Secretary-General said.

The Commonwealth Observer Group will arrive in Malawi on 8 May 2009 and stay until 27 May 2009.

The Group's mandate is to observe the preparations for the election; the polling, counting and results process and the overall electoral environment. The Team is to assess the overall conduct of the process and, where appropriate, make recommendations for the future strengthening of the electoral process in Malawi.

The Group will act impartially and independently and shall conduct itself according to the standards expressed in the International Declaration of Principles for Election Observation to which the Commonwealth is a signatory.

The Group's report will be submitted to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, who will in turn send it to the Government of Malawi, the Malawi Electoral Commission, political parties, and eventually to all Commonwealth Governments.

The full composition of the Group:

H E Mr John Kufuor (Chair), Former President, Ghana

Mr Mahfuz Anam

Editor & Publisher, The Daily Star, Bangladesh

Ms Alexandra Devon

International Governance Consultant, Canada

Mr David Henry

Former Chief Electoral Officer, New Zealand

Dr Jibrin Ibrahim

Director, Centre for Democracy and Development, Nigeria

Mr Des McNulty MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament, UK

Ms Sheila Kawamara-Mishambi

Former Member of the East African Parliament, Uganda

Mr Malleh Sallah

Vice Chairman, Independent Electoral Commission, The Gambia

Ambassador (Mrs) Tabitha Seii

Chairperson, Education Centre for Women in Democracy, Kenya

Senator Kerrie Symmonds

Member of Senate and Attorney-at-Law, Barbados

Mr Mohamed Zahid

Vice President, Human Rights Commission, Maldives

SOURCE: Commonwealth Secretariat