

LESOTHO GENERAL ELECTIONS
ARRIVAL STATEMENT
HIS EXCELLENCY DANNY FAURE
FORMER PRESIDENT OF SEYCHELLES
CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, The Rt. Hon. Patricia Scotland KC has invited me to chair the Commonwealth Observer Group for Lesotho's General Elections.

As an African and former president of Seychelles, I consider this an incredible honour.

I am leading a group of six other eminent persons, appointed from across all regions of the Commonwealth, with a breadth of experience spanning the social and political spectrum, from civil society, media, electoral management and the legal space. We are here, at the invitation of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission of Lesotho, ahead of the elections scheduled to hold on Friday 7th of October.

We are tasked with observing the electoral process, to act impartially and independently, as we assess the pre-election environment, the conduct of elections itself on polling day, and importantly, the post-election period. The mandate placed on our shoulders are ones we take seriously and earnestly.

The significance of elections in a democracy cannot be over-emphasized. More importantly, the significance of *this* election to the people of Lesotho, the Southern Africa region, Africa as a continent, and the whole of the Commonwealth cannot be underscored.

Our planned briefings with relevant stakeholders have already started and we have met with the representatives of the media and civil society organizations, and we plan to have other wide-ranging, updates from the IEBC, political parties, security, citizen observers, and women's and youth groups.

Our group will be split into small teams and will be deployed to several locations across the country to observe the preparations ahead of the polling period. They're also mandated to meet with political parties, security agencies, election officials, and other stakeholders in their respective locations.

On the polling day, we will observe the opening, voting, closing, counting, and results-management processes.

Our mandate is to observe, and not to interfere with, the process but to give a more detailed and substantive account of our observations of the whole electoral process.

On Sunday 9th of October, we will issue a statement on our preliminary findings.

After that, a final report will then be prepared and submitted to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, and subsequently shared with the government of Lesotho, relevant stakeholders, and the public.

The Commonwealth has been in constant engagement with Lesotho, a valuable member, for many years, supporting the country's democracy efforts through legislative drafting and other constitutional issues.

The Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland KC also issued a statement calling for peace. I join her in echoing these sentiments.

We urge all stakeholders and voters, to commit to doing the same, consistent with the Commonwealth's values and principles.

On behalf of the Group, I would like to thank the people of Lesotho for their hospitality and for allowing us to be a part of this process.