

Commonwealth Observer Group

25 February 2023 Nigeria General Elections

2023 NIGERIA GENERAL ELECTIONS
ARRIVAL STATEMENT
HIS EXCELLENCY THABO MBEKI
FORMER PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA
CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP
20 FEBRUARY 2023
ABUJA, NIGERIA

It is my honour and privilege to serve as Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group to Nigeria's 2023 Presidential and National Assembly Elections.

The Group was constituted by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Rt Hon Patricia Scotland KC, at the invitation of the Chairperson of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) of Nigeria.

The Commonwealth Observer Group comprises eminent persons from around the Commonwealth, including politicians, diplomats and experts in law, human rights, gender equality and election administration.

The group is supported by a staff team from the Commonwealth Secretariat led by Mr Joshua Setipa, Senior Director of the Strategy, Portfolio, Partnerships and Digital Division.

Nigeria is Africa's largest democracy and a valued member of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth has a long tradition of supporting the country's democratic development through election observation. This will be the seventh time a Commonwealth Observer Group will be observing elections in Nigeria, since 1999.

Our Commonwealth Observer Group has been in Abuja since 18 February. Our mandate is to observe and assess the pre-election period, activities on polling day and the post-election period. Throughout, we will consider all factors relating to the credibility of the electoral process.

We will assess whether the elections are conducted according to the standards for democratic elections to which Nigeria has committed itself, including the constitutional framework and national legislation as well as Commonwealth and

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other international commitments. As we undertake this assessment and conduct our duties, we will be objective, independent and impartial.

Later today, my fellow observers and I will meet with the Chairman of INEC, Professor Mahmood Yakubu, to learn more about preparations for polling day.

We will deploy our observers to different parts of the country, to observe the campaigning, voting, counting and results process, having taken into account the need to receive briefings from relevant stakeholders, including representatives of political parties, the government, independent institutions, Commonwealth high commissioners and various civil society organisations, including groups representing gender, youth and people with disabilities.

Among other aspects, we will consider whether the conditions exist for credible elections; and whether the voting process is transparent and inclusive.

The Commonwealth Observer Group has no executive role; our function is not to supervise but to observe the process as a whole and to form a judgment accordingly. We are here in our individual capacities as eminent and experienced Commonwealth citizens. As such, our assessment will be our own and not that of any Commonwealth member government or organisation.

Following election day, we will deliver an interim statement, which provides our group's preliminary assessment of the electoral process, at a press conference on 27 February in Abuja. More details of the press conference will be shared by the staff team supporting the Observer Group in due course.

Upon completion of our assignment, we will submit our recommendations in a report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, who will forward it to the Government of Nigeria, the country's Independent National Electoral Commission, the leadership of political parties taking part in the elections, and then to all Commonwealth governments. The report will be made public afterwards.

When we make our observations known, our intent is to offer constructive support to help strengthen the democratic culture, processes and institutions in Nigeria. In doing so, the Commonwealth Observer Group will make recommendations to the authorities concerned on institutional, procedural and other matters as would assist the holding of such elections in future.

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This month's elections will be Africa's largest democratic exercise. It is clear that the outcomes of the elections will be significant not only for Nigeria, but also for the entire continent.

Therefore, we urge all stakeholders in Nigeria to uphold their commitment to ensure a peaceful and inclusive election in which the people of Nigeria are able to freely exercise their right to vote, with the fundamental freedoms of expression, association and assembly fully respected.

On behalf of my fellow observers, I wish Nigeria well as it holds the polls this Saturday. The Nigerian people expect all stakeholders involved to play their part in ensuring that this month's elections are peaceful, transparent and credible.

Thank you for coming to this Commonwealth Observer Group Press Conference.

For more information, please contact:

Snober Abbasi

Senior Communications Officer

Communications Division

Commonwealth Secretariat

Telephone (Nigeria): +234 813 422 0678

Email: s.abbasi@commonwealth.int

Note to Editors

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 56 independent and equal countries. It is home to 2.5 billion people, and includes both advanced economies and developing countries. Thirty-three of our members are small states, including 25 island nations. Our member governments have agreed to shared goals like development, democracy and peace. Our values and principles are expressed in the [Commonwealth Charter](#).