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ARRIVAL STATEMENT

BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP TO MALDIVES

HIS EXCELLENCY DANNY FAURE

FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES

4 SEPTEMBER 2023

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Rt Hon Patricia Scotland KC, has invited me to chairperson the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) to the Republic of Maldives, for the Presidential Election scheduled on 9 September 2023.

I consider it a great honour to be a part of this important democratic endeavour.

The Group was constituted following an invitation from the Elections Commission of Maldives and after a pre-election assessment mission in July 2023. I am joined in this Group by ten other eminent persons from across the Commonwealth, including from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, and the Pacific. They are drawn from various backgrounds ranging from the political, civil society, election management, diplomatic, and legal fields.

Members of the Group arrived on 2 September, and we will stay in Maldives until 15 September. Our presence here affirms the Commonwealth's continuing solidarity with the people of Maldives. This moment is even more significant as this will be the first COG to observe an election in the country since Maldives re-joined the Commonwealth in February 2020.

As independent observers, our mandate is to observe, and not to interfere with, the electoral process and to give a substantive account of our observations. We will evaluate the pre-election environment, polling day, as well as the post-election period. We will consider the electoral process as a whole, and report on whether it has been conducted in accordance with the national, Commonwealth and other international standards to which Maldives has committed itself.

We shall remain objective and impartial in discharging our mandate. The Group's assessment will be its own and not that of the Commonwealth Secretariat or any Commonwealth member country.

Over the next four days, we will receive briefings from a range of stakeholders including from election management officials, representatives of political parties, civil society groups, the police, members of the diplomatic community, and citizen and international observers.

On 7 September, members of the Group will be deployed to selected atolls, where we will observe the pre-election environment. Subsequently, we will observe the



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opening of polls, voting, closing, counting, and the management of results from election day until our departure from Maldives. We will issue an Interim Statement of our preliminary findings shortly after 9 September.

Our final report will be submitted to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Government of the Republic of Maldives, the Elections Commission of Maldives, political parties, and Commonwealth member governments. The report will later be made available to the public.

We are aware of the significance of this election to the people of Maldives. We urge all stakeholders to play their part in ensuring peaceful elections.

On behalf of the Group, I would like to thank the people of Maldives for their participation and for allowing us to be a part of this important process. I wish them well as they prepare to exercise their democratic right to vote.

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Commonwealth Observer Group

This Commonwealth Observer Group to Maldives consists of eleven members (Chairperson and ten observers), supported by eight-member staff team from the Commonwealth Secretariat. The members, in alphabetical order by country name, are:

H.E. Danny Faure (Chairperson)
Former President of the Republic of Seychelles;
Seychelles

Justice (Rtd.) Jackton Boma Ojwang
Retired Supreme Court Justice;
Kenya

Ms. Cronisa Baguga
Deputy Commissioner, Nauru Electoral Commission;
Nauru

Hon Maryan Street
Former Cabinet Minister;
New Zealand

Ms Yemi Adamolekun
Executive Director, Enough is Enough;
Nigeria



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Professor Cynthia Barrow Giles

Professor, Constitutional Governance and Politics University of the West Indies;
Saint Lucia

Ambassador Alari Awahnatu Cole

Member, ECOWAS Council of the Wise; Former Ambassador and High Commissioner;
Sierra Leone

Mr Mahdev Mohan

Former Nominated Member of Parliament and Lawyer;
Singapore

Professor Mandla Mchunu

Former Chief Electoral Officer, Electoral Commission;
South Africa

Mrs Bobbi Rogers

Manager, Corporate Communication, Elections and Boundaries Commission;
Trinidad and Tobago

Ms Anji Hunter

Senior Public Relations Adviser;
United Kingdom

**This statement was updated on 5 September 2023.*