

**2024 SRI LANKA PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**  
**ARRIVAL STATEMENT BY**  
**HIS EXCELLENCY DANNY FAURE**  
**FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES**  
**CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP**  
**16 SEPTEMBER 2024**  
**COLOMBO, SRI LANKA**

I am honoured to be here, along with this group of eminent observers and to have been invited by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, The Rt. Hon. Patricia Scotland KC, to lead the Commonwealth Observer Group for Sri Lanka's presidential election scheduled for 21 September 2024.

I am honoured for so many reasons, because of the significance of this election to the people of Sri Lanka and its importance to the Commonwealth.

This is the Commonwealth's 200<sup>th</sup> election observation mission since it began election observation in 1980, reaching every corner of member countries in order to fulfil its mandate. What an honour to mark that milestone right here in Colombo.

We are here as part of the Commonwealth's full electoral cycle approach in its engagement with member countries, to help strengthen democratic institutions and processes, and enable citizen participation and representation during elections.

On Saturday, the 21<sup>st</sup>, Sri Lankans will head to the polls, coinciding with the International Day of Peace. This globally shared day is a commitment by all humanity to prioritise peace above all other considerations and work towards building a Culture of Peace. This is in line with the Commonwealth values as reflected in the Commonwealth Charter, which calls for free and democratic societies and the promotion of peace and prosperity, thereby improving the lives of all people.

As you all know, this year is especially busy for democracy, with a record number of countries holding elections, and more than a billion people eligible to vote, including our dear Sri Lanka. So, as with all elections, this is an important one.

Important to Sri Lanka, and the region, and important to the Commonwealth and the whole world. This election will have a significant impact on citizens' lives - today and in the years to come. That is why we are here - in solidarity with the people of Sri Lanka and its democratic processes.

This eminent Group was deployed by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, following an invitation from Sri Lanka's Election Commission.

Our group is made up of 14 experts selected from across the Commonwealth. Together as a group, we bring together a diversity of experience, in the fields of elections, law, civil society, politics, human rights, and the media - among others.

Our mandate, as set out in the Commonwealth's 'Revised Guidelines' for election observation, is to observe and evaluate the pre-election environment, polling day activities and the post-election period. We will assess whether conditions exist for a credible, transparent, and inclusive election, including whether there is a level playing field for candidates; whether public media has been impartial; whether the administration of the electoral process has been transparent; and whether the rule of law has been adhered to.

Following the election, our Group will issue a report. The report will assess whether the election was conducted in accordance with the standards to which Sri Lanka has committed itself, including whether the election was conducted in accordance with Sri Lanka's own laws and regulations, and the degree to which this legal framework aligns with the country's regional and international commitments.

In accordance with the provisions of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, to which the Commonwealth Secretariat is a signatory organisation, the Group has no executive role; its function is not to supervise but to observe the process as a whole and to give recommendations accordingly.

The Group is now assembled in Colombo and over the coming days we will be meeting several stakeholders, including the Sri Lanka Election Commission, political parties, the police, civil society groups, citizen observer and monitor groups, and the media.

From 19 September, we will deploy our observers in small teams to different provinces, to observe electoral preparations and meet with local stakeholders in their respective locations.

On Election Day, our Group will observe the opening, voting, closing, counting and the results management processes. We will issue an interim statement on our preliminary findings on 23 September 2024.

On behalf of the Commonwealth Observer Group, I urge all stakeholders to ensure the election is held in a peaceful manner, on Peace Day, and I thank you for allowing us to be a part of this process, as Sri Lankans choose their president next Saturday.

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