



2026 Antigua and Barbuda General Elections

**Arrival Statement by Hon. Dr Pelonomi Venson,
former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Botswana**

Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group

27 April 2026 St. John's

The Antiguan and Barbudan 2026 General Elections is attracting close attention across the region and the wider Commonwealth. It reflects both the importance of the country's democratic institutions and the continued focus on the integrity of electoral processes in small island states.

The Commonwealth has maintained a consistent presence in Antigua and Barbuda's electoral processes since 1999, undertaking a series of observer engagements over that period. This marks the eighth such deployment to the twin island, including our presence at the last general election, and we return once again to take stock of both progress achieved and the challenges that remain within the electoral environment.

These elections provide an important opportunity to further strengthen democratic institutions and build public confidence in the electoral process. It is therefore important that all stakeholders uphold the principles of inclusive, transparent and participatory democracy, where every vote carries equal weight.

Antigua and Barbuda is an active participant in the Commonwealth Election Professionals Programme, an initiative designed to strengthen professional development, peer learning, and knowledge exchange among electoral administrators across the Commonwealth. It is our expectation that the skills, lessons, and good practices from through this initiative are reflected in the conduct of these elections.

Our Group was constituted following an invitation from the Government of Antigua and Barbuda.

I am honoured that the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Hon. Shirley Botchwey, has invited me to serve as Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group for this election.

I am joined by fellow eminent persons drawn from across the Commonwealth, representing diverse regions and professional backgrounds, including election administration, politics, media, and civil society. Together, we bring a broad range of experience to the work of this mission.

Members of the Group have now arrived and will remain in country for the duration of our mandate. As independent observers, our role is to observe, not to intervene, and to provide an impartial assessment of the electoral process.

In fulfilling this mandate, we will assess the pre-election environment, polling day activities, and the post-election period, viewing the process as a whole against national law, Commonwealth values, and relevant international standards. Our findings will be independent and will reflect the collective view of the Group.

Accordingly, from tomorrow, we will begin our engagements with a wide range of stakeholders, including election officials, political representatives, civil society organisations, security agencies, the diplomatic corps, and other observer missions.

Following these engagements, members of the Group will be deployed across the twin island to observe the electoral process on the ground, including polling, counting, and results management.

An interim statement of our preliminary findings will be issued on the first of May, followed by a final report submitted to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, the Antigua and Barbuda Electoral Commission (ABEC), political parties, and other stakeholders, and made publicly available.

In this regard, we urge all stakeholders to play their part in ensuring a credible and peaceful electoral process.

On behalf of the Group, I would like to thank the people of Antigua and Barbuda for their warm welcome and for the opportunity to accompany them at this important moment in their democratic journey.

I THANK YOU.