

**COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP**  
**2019 SRI LANKA PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**

**Statement by Chair**

**Prosper Bani, Former Minister of Interior, Ghana**

**11 November 2019, Colombo, Sri Lanka**

We are honoured to have been requested by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC, to observe the Presidential Election in Sri Lanka scheduled for 16 November 2019 at the invitation of the Election Commission of Sri Lanka.

We arrived on 10 November and will be in Colombo until 22 November. Members of our Group are drawn from various Commonwealth regions, with backgrounds ranging from the political, electoral, civil society and human rights as well as legal fields.

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

Our mandate is to observe and evaluate the pre-election environment, polling day as well as the post-election period. We will consider the various factors impinging on the credibility of the electoral process as a whole, and report on whether it has been conducted according to the national, regional, Commonwealth and international standards to which Sri Lanka has committed itself.

As independent observers, we will remain objective and impartial in discharging these duties. The Group's assessment will be its own and not that of any Commonwealth member country.

We hope that our Group's presence will support the strengthening of democracy in Sri Lanka. We call on all stakeholders to demonstrate commitment to a peaceful, transparent, credible and inclusive election.

The responsibility to act with integrity rests with all stakeholders; the Election Commission, political parties, the media, security agencies, civil society, and voters.

On Thursday, our observers will deploy to various provinces across the country to observe preparations ahead of polling day. Subsequently, we will observe the opening of polls, voting, counting and the management of results from election day until our departure from Sri Lanka. We will issue an *Interim*

*Statement* of our preliminary findings shortly after 16 November. Our final report will be submitted to the Secretary-General and will be made available to the public afterwards.

On behalf of my fellow Group members, I wish the people of Sri Lanka well as they exercise their right to vote on Saturday, 16 November.

The Commonwealth Observer Group is composed of:

- **Mr Prosper Bani, Former Minister of Interior, Ghana-(Chair)**
- **Mr Paul Dacey, Former Deputy Electoral Commissioner, Australia**
- **Mr Darrell Bradley, President of the Senate and member of the CLGF Board, Belize**
- **Ms Sabrina Grover, Strategic Partnerships Advisor, Young Diplomats of Canada**
- **Ms Sarah Fradgley, Media and Communications Expert, New Zealand**
- **Hon Sana Ullah Baloch, Member of the Balochistan Provincial Assembly, Pakistan**
- **Ms Madeleine Nirere, Chairperson, National Commission for Human Rights, Rwanda**

- Mr Vijay Krishnarayan, Former Director-General, Commonwealth Foundation, Trinidad and Tobago
- Amb Bernadette Olowo-Freers, Former Ambassador, Uganda
- Dr Meena Shivdas, International Gender and Development Specialist, United Kingdom
- Mr Boniface Cheembe, Executive Director, Southern African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, Zambia