

Mozambique General Elections 2019

**Preliminary Statement by HE Stephen
Kalonzo Musyoka**

**Former Vice-President, Republic of Kenya
Chair of the Commonwealth Observer
Group**

15 October 2019

Your Excellencies,

Fellow Heads of Election Observation Missions,

Members of the media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On 15th October 2019, the people of Mozambique reaffirmed their commitment to our shared values of democracy by exercising their right to vote in the sixth multi-party elections in the country's political history.

They did so in a largely peaceful manner. The Commonwealth Observer Group commends them. We are honoured to have this opportunity to stand in solidarity with all Mozambicans.

Our Group was constituted by the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC, following an invitation from the Government of Mozambique to observe these elections. We arrived on 10 October and will depart on 20 October.

Our preliminary findings will be shared in the following manner: I will first provide our key findings on the pre-election environment, after which I will focus on our observations on Election Day. Finally, I will share our impressions of the post-election stage so far, mindful that the results process is ongoing.

This holistic manner is in line with our mandate, underscored in the arrival statement we issued on 12 October 2019.

Let me state that in accordance with this mandate, we will be assessing this election according to the national, regional, Commonwealth and international standards to which Mozambique has committed itself.

Our final report will be submitted to the Secretary-General and will be made available to the public thereafter.

I will begin with our assessment of the pre-election environment.

The Pre-Election Environment

Since our arrival in Maputo on 10 October, we have met with a range of stakeholders including political parties, civil society, the Mozambique National Electoral Commission (CNE), and members of the diplomatic community. We observed some final rallies on 12 October.

On 13 October, members of our Group were deployed to Maputo City and Maputo, Nampula, Sofala and Zambézia Provinces. Our Observers in Maputo also covered Gaza Province on Election Day.

I will start with the positives, two of which are the provision of public campaign funds, as well as the allocation of regular and equitable broadcasting time on public radio and television stations for eligible political parties.

That said, our value, as election observers, lies in making recommendations on areas that might require improvement.

One such area in these elections is voter registration: Following reports of allegations around voter registration, especially the disputed statistics in Gaza, we raised the matter with the Chair of CNE. We remain concerned about the impact of these allegations on the elections in the affected areas and will continue to

follow the outcome of the polls. We will provide our assessment in our final report.

We took note that all political parties were generally able to engage in campaign activities. However, we received reports from two opposition political parties about restrictions in accessing certain party strongholds and violent attacks on party members. The governing party also informed us of such attacks on their members.

A number of stakeholders reported a heightened scale of violence and tensions ahead of these elections.

In our arrival statement issued on 12 October, we condemned all incidents of violence including the killing of the local observer, Mr Anastácio Matavele. We continue to urge a thorough investigation into this and any other incidents of violence.

We encourage the use of the appropriate legal channels to pursue all complaints and grievances in order to ensure thorough investigations into these allegations.

Another issue brought to our attention was the delay in disbursement of public campaign funds. We will look into this matter in more detail and reflect our assessment in our final report.

A matter that was of particular concern to us was the delay, and in many reported cases, failure to accredit

significant numbers of citizen observers. We raised this issue with the Chairperson of the CNE who assured us of ongoing efforts to ensure the increased numbers of citizen observers for these elections would be accredited.

It is regrettable that this matter remained unresolved and that on Election Day, certain areas may have been deprived of the scrutiny that citizens who are often more familiar with local context are able to provide.

Nonetheless, our Observers met and engaged with citizen observers in the field, including the Peace Room which comprises a network of local civil society groups, covering six districts. We were encouraged to hear from the Peace Room in Zambézia that 77% of their observers had been accredited, allowing them to cover 73% of that Province.

Election Day

On the eve of elections, our Group observed preparations by the Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (STAE) officials, and met with local police and political party officials. They did not report any major logistical challenges.

Our Group had earlier been informed by the Chairperson of the CNE that due to the insurgency in the far North of Cabo Delgado Province, polling arrangements in some

districts may be impacted. We are following the outcome of the polls in that province in order to assess the overall impact in our final report.

We noted that in spite of the destructive and fatal impact of Cyclones Idai and Kenneth which hit Mozambique in March and April 2019 respectively, recovery efforts were such that elections were held in the provinces that had been most affected.

Our Observers in Sofala Province confirmed the use of temporary structures for polling stations. Notwithstanding the difficult circumstances, including challenges to access by less abled voters and in some cases, over-crowding in small huts, voting proceeded in these areas.

The Commonwealth Observer Group would like to commend the staff of the CNE, STAE, polling officials, and all other institutions who worked tirelessly to ensure these elections took place in the aftermath of these serious natural disasters.

Another key observation was that contrary to the prohibition of campaign materials in the forty-eight hours preceding the elections, and also during polling day, campaign materials were visible in some parts of the country on Election Day.

On Election Day, polling stations generally opened on time. They were equipped with requisite polling staff

and materials. Although there were some variations in the lay-out outlined in the training manual for polling officials, the secrecy of the vote was not compromised.

The procedures for the opening of the polls were followed.

In a number of cases, police presence at polling stations breached the 300 metres perimeter limit indicated in the electoral law.

We were impressed by the confidence, and enthusiasm of polling officials, a significant number of whom were young men and women.

In most polling stations we visited, except for Xai-Xai in Gaza Province, party agents were present; a significant number of them were from FRELIMO, RENAMO and MDM. Party agents had access to hard copies of the register, which they used to verify voters as voting proceeded.

We liaised with international and citizen observers we met. We also noted that in polling stations where media representatives were present, they appeared to be able to perform their duties unhindered.

We observed that the processing of voters remains cumbersome, resulting in an arduous polling experience for many voters, as well as queue management challenges in some instances. In this respect, some of the observations and recommendations made by

Commonwealth Observers in 2014 aimed at streamlining the process remain valid.

These include: reviewing the necessity of providing voting instructions to all voters irrespective of need; reviewing the role of the President (or Presiding Officer) to ensure the least constraint in his/her ability to manage the smooth running of the station; and ensuring 'tellers' have adequate training in queue management.

Some of our Observers witnessed special voting for categories of persons on duty on election day, as well as priority voting for those who needed it including: the elderly; pregnant women; and women with children, as provided under the electoral laws. Observers in Nampula Province, however, reported unfavourable treatment of vulnerable groups in polling stations they visited. They further reported that in some cases priority given to government officials sparked scuffles.

Voters who were still in the queue were allowed to vote at close of polls at 1800hrs, in accordance with the law.

Closing and counting procedures were generally adhered to in most cases.

The recommendations of the Commonwealth Observers in 2014 remain valid in this aspect of the process too: There is need to streamline the counting process in a manner that does not detract from the accuracy and



transparency of the process. For instance, once a ballot box has been opened, the lid could be returned without resealing it. Additionally, the announcement of the vote cast on a ballot by two different officials, has the potential to create confusion and mistakes. We will revisit this point in our final report.

The Group has also taken note of various allegations and reports brought to its attention. These involve electoral malpractices including ballot stuffing, citizens found with unmarked and pre-marked ballot papers, and unregistered voters attempting to vote. We again strongly urge that these are brought to the attention of the appropriate institutions provided by law.

Furthermore, allegations of intimidation of voters and serious irregularities, largely by the governing party, FRELIMO, and in some cases, RENAMO, were brought to the attention of our Observers in Zambézia and Nampula. In two districts of Nampula, our Observers were witnesses to occurrences that gave credence to some of these allegations. We are validating our observations with the relevant authorities and other stakeholders and witnesses and will provide a more detailed account in our final report.

We note also that in some cases, there were mounting tensions in the build up to the closing and counting stage. For example, our Observer present in Ilha de Moçambique in Nampula Province, reported the

deployment of a Rapid Intervention (police) Force on two occasions, both of which were later withdrawn.

As details emerge, we will assess the impact of these incidents to understand the extent to which they may have affected the entire process.

Overall, in most of the polling stations where we were present, the voting and counting process was largely peaceful.

We wish to stress, however, that the process is ongoing. We will provide our definitive assessment in our final report. I will now turn to the results management phase which is underway.

Post-Election

The day after the elections, our Observers in the field met with district election officials, the police, political parties and civil society to receive their feedback on the process so far, and to follow up on the ongoing results stage.

Some of our Observers witnessed some party supporters celebrating victory prematurely. This raised tensions in these areas.

We encourage all Mozambicans, regardless of party affiliation, to remain patient and tolerant while the

election management body concludes the results processes.

This is the time for all critical stakeholders - including political parties and their leaders, the election management body, civil society, and the media - to play their part in fulfilling the expectations of the people for credible and peaceful elections.

Thank you.

For more information, or to organise media interviews, please contact:

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