



Press Release: For Immediate Release, Tuesday 25 May 2010

UK electoral system “not corrupted, but certainly corruptible” say Commonwealth Observers

In a report published today, a team of Commonwealth Election Observers say that the UK electoral system is “not corrupted, but certainly corruptible”.

The team of 7 Parliamentarians and 4 civil society officials from 11 different countries around the Commonwealth were among the first outside Observers to be allowed into UK polling stations. They were also the first Commonwealth team to observe elections in the UK.

Though “generally impressed by the conduct of the election” and satisfied that it was undertaken in a “fair and free manner”, their report highlights several vulnerabilities in the system which make it “corruptible and open to fraud”. “While trust is good”, they say, “caution and deterrent controls are better”.

Their report offers some key recommendations for improvement, including:

- Improved identification of voters at registration and at polling stations
- Better verification of postal ballots to close loopholes in the system
- Greater numbers of staff in polling stations to ensure people can vote in timely manner
- Centralisation of councils’ electoral roll software to prevent voter registration in more than one constituency

The Team, who were brought to the UK by The Royal Commonwealth Society and The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK Branch, observed polling in four constituencies: Glasgow South West, Morecambe and Lunesdale, Birmingham Yardley and Rochford and Southend.

Their objectives were to:

- gain insight into the electoral processes of the UK
- share lessons from their own countries
- make recommendations for improvement

The final report of the Commonwealth Election Observation Team to the 2010 UK General Election is launched today in Parliament to coincide with the State Opening of Parliament.

Notes to Editors

A copy of the Commonwealth Election Observation Team's Final Report will be available to download from: www.thercs.org/society/electionteam

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The Royal Commonwealth Society was founded in 1868 and conducts a range of events and activities aimed at promoting international understanding. Its educational, youth and cultural programmes include one of the world's oldest and largest schools essay competitions, and an innovative international youth leadership programme. HM Queen Elizabeth II is Patron and Peter Kellner is Chairman. Headquartered at the Commonwealth Club in London, the RCS has some 4000 members in the UK and a presence in 40 Commonwealth countries through a network of branches and Commonwealth societies. The RCS is a registered charity in England & Wales (226748) See www.thercs.org

The Royal Commonwealth Society is grateful to The Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust Ltd for its funding of the civil society participants in this initiative.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) UK is one of over 175 branches of the CPA – the professional association of all Commonwealth parliamentarians. CPA UK's membership is made up of Members from both Houses of the United Kingdom Parliament who work to strengthen parliamentary democracy. CPA UK conducts international parliamentary outreach on behalf of Parliament and the wider CPA by parliamentary diplomacy and parliamentary strengthening activities to contribute to the capacity of partner parliaments. See www.cpaukbranch.org

The Commonwealth: The modern Commonwealth was established with 8 members in 1949. In 2010, it has 54 members with a total population of nearly 2 billion. It is an association of governments and peoples, built around shared language, institutions, challenges, aspirations and values. The Commonwealth promotes democracy, development, and diversity within its member countries and across the world.

Commonwealth Election Team Profiles - Parliamentarian Observers:

- **Bangladesh: Hon. Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh MP**

A Barrister-at-Law and Member of the Bangladeshi Parliament, Sheikh Taposh has been practising in the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh since 2001. He was elected as a Member of Parliament in the 2008 General Election. He is married with two sons and presently lives in Dhaka.

- **Kenya: Hon. Ababu Namwamba MP**

Born in Uganda to Kenyan parents, Ababu is an International Human Rights Lawyer who trained in Nairobi and Washington DC, USA. He is currently serving his first term as Member of Parliament for Budalang'i Constituency. He co-chairs the Parliamentary Sect Committee on Constitution Review; serves on Parliament's Committee on Administration of Justice and the Committee on Delegated Legislation; and chairs Bunge Football Club, of which he is the lead striker. In 2003, Ababu won the Jubilee

Global Award for Social Justice in recognition of his international human rights work and in 2009, he was voted a “Young Global Leader” by the World Economic Forum.

- **Rwanda: Hon. Jeanne d'Arc Uwimanimpaye MP**

A member of the ruling party, RPF, Hon. Jeanne d'Arc Uwimanimpaye joined the parliament in 2008 as a representative from the Eastern Province. She is a member of the Women Parliamentarian Forum and the Economic Affairs Committee. She graduated in Economics from the National University of Rwanda. Before joining Parliament, she worked as a secondary school teacher and in local government as a Public Relations Officer and district internal auditor. She is the mother of two sons.

- **Ghana: Hon. George Boakye, MP**

MP for Asunafo South in the Brong Ahafo region (middle belt) of Ghana, George Boakye is a teacher by profession. He holds a Master of Education degree and a degree in Law and Sociology from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ghana. He is also the holder of a Bachelor of Arts with a Diploma in Education from the University of Education, Winneba. George joined politics in 2001 when he was nominated as the District Chief Executive (Mayor) for Asunafo District in the Brong Ahafo Region. He was sworn in as a Parliamentarian in January 2009 and serves as a member of the select committee on Education and Poverty Reduction.

- **Jamaica: Ms Lisa Hanna MP**

The Member of Parliament for South East St Ann, Lisa Hanna is a former winner of Miss World (1993). Before moving into politics, she worked as a television presenter and communications consultant.

- **Sierra Leone: Hon. Marie Marilyn Jalloh**

A member of the All People's Congress Party and MP in Bombali District, Marie Marilyn Jalloh sits on the Committees for Appointments and Public Service, Education, Youth and Sports, and Agriculture and Food Security. She studied Rural Development and worked as a Development Specialist before becoming an MP.

- **Malaysia: Hon. Chua Tee Yong MP**

Chau Tee Long was MCA's youngest candidate in Johor at the 12th general elections. He has been a MP since 2008 for Labis.

Commonwealth Election Team Profiles - Civil Society Observers:

- **Nigeria: Mr Innocent Chukwuma, Transition Monitoring Group**

Mr. Innocent Chukwuma is a co-founder and former chairman of Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), a coalition of 250 civil society organizations (CSOs) that observe elections in Nigeria. Under his leadership, CSOs fielded 50,000 observers in Nigeria's general elections in 2007. Mr. Chukwuma is currently the executive Director of CLEEN Foundation, Nigeria's leading non-governmental organization on promotion of public safety, security and accessible justice. He is a leading researcher, consultant and change manager on policing and criminal justice reform in West Africa. He has a Masters degree in criminal justice from the University of Leicester, UK and has worked as a consultant to the European Union, Department for

International Development, United Nations Office for Drug and Crime (UNODC), British Council, South African Institute for International Affairs (SAIA), International Council on Human Rights Policy, Nigeria Police Force, Police Service Commission, Ministry of Police Affairs, International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC), among others. He has numerous publications to his credit.

- **Guyana: Mr Gino Persaud, Electoral Assistance Bureau**

A young Attorney-at-Law with nine years at the Bar, Gino Persaud work as an Associate at the Law Firm of de Caires Fitzpatrick & Karran in Guyana. He was awarded a British Chevening Scholarship in 2004 and has a growing human rights practice. He is also an active member of civil society having worked with the Electoral Assistance Bureau for the 2006 general elections. He is also a Commissioner on the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission and Vice-Chairman of a local NGO.

- **Malawi: Mr Aloisious Nthenda, Malawi Electoral Support Network**

Aloisious Nthenda has worked for the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Malawi since 1997 as Archdiocesan Secretary. He was elected Chairperson for the Malawi Electoral Support Network (MESN) in 2008. MESN is a grouping of civil society organizations involved in national elections and democratic governance in Malawi. He is also the Chairperson for the SADC Electoral Support Network, the electoral network for all Southern African countries. He has actively participated in Elections in Malawi and the SADC region since 1998 and has been on International Observer Missions to countries like Mozambique and Zambia. He holds a Master of Arts Degree in Sustainable Development.

- **Sri Lanka: Mr Dasanayaka Dissanayake, Centre for Monitoring Election Violence**

An attorney-at-Law and LLB graduate of the University of Colombo, Mr Dasanayaka Dissanayake has been involved in Election monitoring since 1999 and has served as the National Coordinator of the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence since 2005. He was a member of a long-term election observation mission conducted by NDI USA for Bangladesh in parliamentary elections.