

Statement by Outgoing Chair of CEN Steering Committee

Mr Ahmed Isaack Hassan

**Chairperson, Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission of
Kenya**

The Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General Dr Josephine Ojiambo, Mr Mark Ramkerrysingh, incoming Chair of the CEN Steering Committee, and Chairperson of the Elections and Boundaries Commission of Trinidad and Tobago, Excellencies, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure to be here with you all. I would like to express my appreciation for the warm welcome and excellent arrangements made for us by our hosts.

I have had the honour and privilege of serving as the Chair of the CEN Steering Committee for the past two years. I am now delighted to hand over that role to my distinguished colleague Mark Ramkerrysingh. I wish him well and am confident that with him at the helm, the Commonwealth Electoral Network - our network - is in very good hands.

I am pleased that despite some challenges, the Network has continued to move forward. Three further Steering Committee Meetings have been held, at the Secretariat Headquarters in April and July 2015, and one here this morning on the eve of the Conference.

There had been six CEN Working Groups since the Network was established. And this continued with a seventh in Suva, Fiji from 2-3

December 2015 on the Impact of New Media on Elections, with participants from the EMBs of Australia, Barbados, Fiji, Nigeria, South Africa and Vanuatu.

A key achievement during the past biennium has been the successful completion of Phase I of the Commonwealth Junior Elections Professionals Initiative. I look forward to the commencement of the second phase of this innovative programme from which many of our EMBs will be able to derive real benefit.

I am delighted that progress has been made in promoting good practice in the field of election management, and in fostering a sense of community amongst Commonwealth EMBs. The CEN continues to facilitate experience sharing, dialogue and exchanges of knowledge between EMBs, and generally has created an environment supportive of peer networking. Ours can be a solitary profession, and as elections professionals, we are conscious of the pressures and challenges we all face in seeking to serve our citizens.

I am told that one example of the CEN's ambition to demonstrate contemporary relevance in the documentation, definition and promotion of good Commonwealth Electoral Practice, to which many of you contributed, is the Compendium of Commonwealth Good Practice, which will be presented by the Deputy-Secretary-General shortly. I am equally pleased that four draft "Good Practice Guides" have been distributed for discussion, peer review and adoption during this Conference, to be published thereafter.

I had the pleasant duty and pleasure of representing the Network at a joint initiative between the CEN and Pacific Islands, Australia and New Zealand Electoral Administrators (PIANZEA), a Pacific Electoral Networks Meeting that was held in Nadi, Fiji from 9-11 May 2016. The theme of the meeting was “Promoting Electoral Integrity”.

I personally benefitted immensely from the in-depth consideration of challenges we all face as leaders of EMBs from the perspective of the Pacific region, in promoting electoral best practice, the independence and impartiality of EMBs; capacity building, financial and human resources constraints and the professionalism of EMB staff.

I would like to thank the Commonwealth Secretariat, and through you, Deputy Secretary-General, the Secretary-General for the continuing support and management of our Network.

Thank you also for providing this forum as an opportunity for us to meet, exchange ideas and experiences. This quality, coupled with the further work to document, define and promote good Commonwealth electoral practice will, in my view, place the CEN on an even stronger footing to be of even greater service to our EMBs.

I wish the Commonwealth Network every success in the future.