

**WELCOMING REMARKS BY MR. AHMED ISSACK HASSAN**  
**CHAIRPERSON OF THE INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL AND**  
**BOUNDARIES COMMISSION BIENNIAL CONFERENCE 23 - 24**  
**JUNE 2014 NAIROBI, KENYA AT INTERCONTINENTAL NAIROBI**

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**Observe protocol**

The Secretary General Dr. Kamalesh Sharma,

The Attorney-General of Kenya, Prof Githu Muigai

The Outgoing Chair of CEN Steering Committee, Mr. Marc Mayrand, Chief Electoral Officer, Canada guests and colleagues.

I am delighted to welcome you all to our beloved country, Kenya. I am also happy to see most of you again after our last meeting in Toronto Canada.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Kenya is proud to be a member of the Commonwealth Electoral Network. We strive to build a remarkable electoral system that inspires confidence among our electorates as it wins admiration from our friends and partners. One of the ways of knowing whether or not we are making progress in

putting in place a world class system is to subject such system to global review and benchmarking. This conference therefore gives us all opportunity for growth and resilience.

The African tradition cherished the power of networks and networking long before the revolution in travel and communications. There is an African saying that the child who has not eaten food elsewhere thinks his or her mother is the best cook.

I believe we are all experts, in our rights, in matters of elections. But I also believe that we start feeling that we are becoming **better** experts when we share experiences and subject our processes and systems to peer review. That is the opportunity this conference brings to us all. It is an opportunity the team from Kenya's electoral authority, the IEBC, is here to grab.

The theme of this year's conference, *Strengthening Institutional Capacity and Electoral Integrity*, speaks strongly to our opportunities and challenges. Since the unfortunate strife of 2007/2008 that fueled by a flawed election, Kenya has worked so hard to de-bug every hitch that plagued the electoral practice. We have introduced reforms, both legal and administrative. We have worked hard to build capacity by recruiting competent staff and continuously trained them. These efforts and networking opportunities like the one we are engaging in now, gave us the confidence to undertake a huge general election early last year.

Despite the challenges we faced, especially with technology, we are happy that our contingency measures ensured that the integrity of the election was

not compromised. Therefore kindly bear with us if we appear over-networking. We are only de-bugging and finding ways to strengthen our system. We are only too eager to share experiences and learn from various jurisdictions.

Electoral bodies employ ways and methods to have increased voter participation. They work hard to ensure the integrity of the vote and to uphold the principles of democracy. It must not be lost to us that the quality of an electoral process invariably reflects on the integrity of the election management body. If people trust the outcome, then they trust the process and sometimes trust the management of the election.

I deliberately say **sometimes** because elections produce winner and losers and it is not easy having all of them happy at the same time.

The Commonwealth Electoral Network avails tremendous opportunities to advance progressive election culture and good electoral practices among EMBs. We need to identify strategies and best practices for strengthening the institutional capacity and the functions of EMBs. We can only achieve this if we will be candid in sharing our experiences.

Kenya is proud to be part of this network. As I mentioned earlier, it has been one year since Kenya conducted its first general election under the new Constitutional dispensation. We recently concluded an internal evaluation of how we conducted the 2013 general elections. We are now presenting it to stakeholders and this gathering here is indeed another stakeholder's forum.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am sure the engagements and interactions will be exciting and enlightening. We are grateful to the Commonwealth Secretariat for the time, effort and devotion towards this initiative since the inception of CEN in 2010. The IEBC and Kenya will remain a dedicated partner. We will work together to bring change in the management of elections not only to ensure that free and fair but also friendly and joyous. Elections must not be allowed to be a source of strife, pain and agony. We must manage perceptions and realities that come with such a highly polarizing exercise.

Finally I want to thank my predecessor for his steady leadership of this great Network.

Thank you all for joining us here in Nairobi. I hope you will enjoy your stay and have a productive and most memorable conference.

**GOD BLESS YOU AND THANK YOU**