

## **Malawi Incumbent President re-elected**

With 93% of the votes counted, Malawi's President Bingu wa Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) is set to be inaugurated for a second term after a landslide win. Interim reports issued by domestic and international election observers agreed that the election process on polling day went without significant incident, but were unanimously critical of the run-up to the election.

The Malawi Election Support Network, a local coalition of 75 civil society organisations, noted in its preliminary report that voting on election day was generally free and fair but that the political environment ahead of the election did not meet the minimum standards laid down by the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Former Ghanaian president John Kufuor, heading a team of Commonwealth election observers, said that election day had been peaceful and the voting process well managed, but key benchmarks for democratic elections had not been met. The Commonwealth's interim report commented that: "the overwhelming impact of the exploitation of the incumbency advantage, especially the unashamed bias of the state TV and radio, created a markedly unlevel playing field, tarnishing the otherwise democratic character of the campaign."

The electoral commission said the DPP had won more than 2.7m votes, with the principal opposition challenger, John Tembo of the Malawi Congress Party taking nearly 1.3m. The United Democratic Front (UDF), led by former president Bakili Muluzi, has conceded defeat saying: "The UDF party and its chairman wishes the president well as he governs the country in the next five years."