



# **CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM) ELECTORAL OBSERVER MISSION TO ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA GENERAL ELECTIONS HELD ON 12 MARCH 2009**

## **PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

On the invitation of the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, the Caribbean Community mounted a CARICOM Electoral Observer Mission to monitor the election system and processes, as well as the conduct of the General Elections held on 12 March 2009.

The eleven member Observer Mission led by Mr. Noel Lee, former Director of Elections of Jamaica was drawn from the following CARICOM Member States:

- Barbados;
- Guyana;
- Haiti;
- Jamaica;
- Saint Lucia; and,
- Suriname.

Two members of the Secretariat staff, Ms. Dennisia Francisco and Ms. Serojnie Seetaram provided administrative support to the Mission.

A Core Group comprising of the Chief of Mission and the support staff arrived in Antigua and Barbuda on 5 March 2009 and the other observers arrived on 10 March 2009.

The Core Group paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister, the Honourable Baldwin Spencer, and met with the leader of the Antigua Labour Party (ALP), Mr. Lester Bird, the Chairman of the United Progressive Party (UPP), Mr. Leon Symister; the Deputy Chairman of the Organization for National Development (OND), Mr. Ralph Francis; the acting Commissioner of Police, Mr. Tom Bennette; the Chairman and members of the Antigua and Barbuda Electoral Commission; representatives of various Non -Governmental Organisations; and various stakeholders in Barbuda. The Core Group also visited the majority of the polling locations on the twin islands of Antigua and Barbuda, observed motorcades and attended a rally.

On Election Day the Observer Mission monitored the electoral process, including the opening of the Poll, the voting process, the closing of the Poll and the counting of the ballots.

Voting was conducted at 151 polling stations situated in 17 constituencies across Antigua and Barbuda. The CARICOM Observer Mission was deployed in 16 of the 17 constituencies. However

a team was not deployed to Barbuda. Overall the Observer Mission visited almost all the stations on Election Day and found the operations satisfactory.

A few stations were not opened on time because of the absence of the voters' lists. The electors should be commended for their patience displayed while waiting for voting to commence. The Mission was impressed with the efficiency of the poll workers and with the orderly manner in which they executed their duties. The polling stations were conveniently located and were easily accessible by electors. The security was adequate and the officers displayed a very professional approach to the electors, which served to contribute to the calm atmosphere in the polling locations.

The Mission's assessment of the conduct of the Poll is that voters were able to cast their ballots without intimidation or harassment, and that the voting process was conducted in an orderly, free and peaceful manner.

A Report of the General Elections will be subsequently prepared and submitted to the CARICOM Secretary-General, Dr. Edwin W. Carrington.

The CARICOM Electoral Observer Mission is very pleased with, and grateful for, the cooperation received from the representatives of the various stakeholders in the General Elections.

CARICOM Electoral Observer Mission  
St. John's Antigua and Barbuda  
13 March 2009