



CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM) ELECTORAL OBSERVER MISSION TO THE GENERAL ELECTIONS OF GUYANA ON MONDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2011 PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

The CARICOM Electoral Observer Mission was mounted at the invitation of the Government of Guyana to monitor the conduct of the General and Regional Elections on 28 November 2011.

The Core Group of two persons namely Mr. Hensley Robinson of Barbados, Head of Mission and Ms. Lorna Simon of Antigua and Barbuda, Deputy Head of Mission arrived in Guyana on Tuesday, 22 November 2011 and immediately began discussions with the officials of GECOM in the persons of Dr. Steve Surujbally, the Chairman and Mr. Gocool Boodoo, the Chief Elections Officer and officials from the Police, Political Parties, Commerce and Industry, the Public Service Union, the Trades Union Congress and the Local Human Rights Association.

The main party of the group which comprised some thirteen (13) persons arrived on Thursday, 24 November 2011 and was joined by four persons from the CARICOM Secretariat.

The nineteen (19) persons were deployed in eight teams of two each and one of three to cover Election Day activities.

On Election Day one team was deployed in Regions 3, 5 and 10 respectively; two teams to Region 4 and four teams to Region 6.

In addition to the "Scope of Services" provided by the CARICOM Secretariat, the teams were further advised to pay special attention to:

- (i) the opening of the poll;
- (ii) the voting process;
- (iii) the environment at polling stations; and
- (iv) the closing of the poll and the count.

Members of the Mission visited a significant number of polling stations which provided them with adequate opportunity to make a good overall assessment on the conditions in those areas. The polling stations opened on time and it was clear to all of us that the officials representing GECOM and the Chief Elections Officer were well trained and prepared for the tasks.

During the early hours of the poll, observers noticed long lines at the polling stations but in spite of that the behaviour was very good. The officials remained calm and focused and the observation is that the process was transparent and in those circumstances electors were able to give free expressions of their feelings when casting their ballots. It is to be noted that despite the long lines immediately after the polls opened, by mid-morning the lines were reduced significantly.

During the day the electoral officials continued to perform well and the procedures as laid down by GECOM were adequately followed.

At the closing of the poll at the fifteen (15) polling stations where this was observed, there was no one waiting in line to cast a vote at 6:00 pm., hence only the officials, police and observers witnessed the closing of poll. No issues arose with the counting of the ballots. All the observers took part in that process and were satisfied with the proceedings.

The Mission's assessment of Election Day is that the people of Guyana were given the opportunity under good conditions to elect a government.

A full report on the Mission's findings and recommendations will be submitted to the Secretary-General of CARICOM.

Electoral Observer Mission 29 November, 2011