



# **CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM) ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION TO THE GENERAL ELECTIONS IN JAMAICA ON 3 SEPTEMBER 2007**

## **PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

The CARICOM Electoral Observation Mission was mounted as a result of an invitation by the Government of Jamaica to monitor the General Elections, scheduled originally for 27 August 2007 but postponed to 3 September 2007 mainly due to the impact of hurricane Dean.

The key tasks of the eight-person Mission were to monitor the preparations and organizational arrangements for the Elections; to observe the electoral process, including the casting of ballots, opening and closing of the poll, and the counting of the ballots; and to assess the outcome of the Elections, as well as its immediate impact on the social and economic environment.

In an effort to monitor the preparations for the Elections, the Observation Mission met with relevant officials and stakeholders, including the Chairman of the Electoral Commission of Jamaica, the Political Ombudsman, the Director of Elections, and the Office of the Commissioner of Police. The Mission also held discussion with representatives of the two main political parties, the People's National Party (PNP) and the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP). The Mission had also intended to attend the scheduled political rallies in Kingston and St. Andrew, but the rallies were cancelled, in part, due to political disturbances and apparent fear of violence.

However, the consultations with the officials and stakeholders, in addition to the Mission's own observations, led to the team's satisfaction with the state of readiness of the electoral machinery for the Elections.

On Election Day, the eight members of the Observation Mission were deployed in different constituencies in the Parishes of Kingston, St. Andrew and St. Catherine, which account for a substantial portion of the electorate.

Based on the Mission's observation of the electoral process, voters turned out in large numbers during the early part of the morning and generally were able to cast their ballots without intimidation or hindrance, despite minor incidents of disturbances. A few of the Polling Stations opened minutes later than the scheduled time of 7:00 am, but voters were orderly and exercised patience.

The management of the polling stations was generally efficient and was conducted in a professional manner, although the administrative competence of some Presiding Officers was below and acceptable level. However, station management was slightly impaired by the fact that

many voters arrived without ID cards, which caused unnecessary delays. In general, voting procedures were followed, with minor variations and a few infractions. The transparency of the voting process was ensured and the secrecy of the ballot was also respected. The voting process was also peaceful, especially with the presence of security officers at all Polling Stations and more so in the troubled so-called "hot spots". The security officers ensured the peaceful and orderly conduct of the Poll, and should be highly commended.

The Mission also commends the people of Jamaica for ensuring that the Elections were conducted in a relatively peaceful manner. The preliminary results of the General Elections seem to reflect the will of the people and the acceptance of the final results, when announced will further enhance the democratic and electoral process in Jamaica in which the people have shown confidence in recent times.

The strengthening of the electoral process could be further assured by acting on some of the recommendations that the Mission will be making in its Report to the CARICOM Secretary-General. Such recommendations will relate mainly to improvement of facilities for the physically challenged; public relations in terms of the use of ID cards; and the training of Electoral Day Workers.

While the Mission encountered no violence or disorderly conduct during our tours and inspections on Election Day, we are aware of the violence reported in the Media on the run up to the election and on Election Day. We urge the various people and stakeholders in the electoral process and particularly the various political parties to ensure that all acts of violence are eradicated for the political landscape of Jamaica.

The CARICOM Electoral Observation Mission takes this opportunity to express sincere thanks to the Chairman of the Electoral Commission of Jamaica and the Director of Elections and the staff of the Electoral Office of Jamaica for their tremendous support. Sincere gratitude is also extended to the Police and other security personnel, the political parties, other observers and the Media for their generous assistance. Above all, the Mission expresses appreciation to the people of Jamaica for the warmth and courtesies accorded to its members.

CARICOM Electoral Observation Mission  
Kingston, Jamaica  
4 September 2007