



PRELIMINARY STATEMENT OF THE CARICOM ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION (CEOM) TO GENERAL ELECTIONS OF SURINAME

An eight-member CARICOM Election Observation Mission (CEOM) comprising Observers from The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Jamaica, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago was stationed in Suriname on the invitation of the Government of the Republic of Suriname to observe that country's General Elections held on Monday, 25 May 2015. The objective of the Mission was to monitor the electoral process, including the opening of the poll; the voting process; the closing of the poll; and the counting of the ballots.

There were 356,223 registered voters in the 10 districts and 623 polling stations. The CEOM was divided into four teams comprising two persons each and visited the districts of Paramaribo, Para, Commewijne and Wanica, observing the voting process in several polling stations and gathering as much information as possible on the process.

The Reports from the teams indicated that all polling stations visited opened at the official time of 7:00 am. Prior to this, as prescribed by law, the ballot boxes were viewed as empty by the poll workers and agents of the Political Parties and then sealed by the Chairperson (Presiding Officer) before the first person voted.

Political Parties were well represented by their agents at all the polling stations visited as the law permits for campaigning to take place within the precincts of polling stations. There were no reports of any disturbances and voters, who appear to be very knowledgeable of the process, were allowed to exercise their franchise without intimidation. The workers in the polling stations were efficient and this allowed for a smooth process throughout the day as long lines were seen at only a few polling stations.

The counting of ballots commenced about an hour after the close of the polls at 7:00 p.m. and was conducted in an orderly manner in the presence of the polling agents from the various Political Parties.

The presence of security personnel was evident at all polling stations visited and this would have contributed to the order which was exhibited throughout the day.

Generally, the results of the day's activity on polling day gleaned by the CEOM proved that the process was transparent, free and fair. Electors cast their vote without fear, intimidation or harassment and the results would have represented the will of the people.

The CEOM wishes to express its appreciation to all stakeholders and the people of the Republic of Suriname for their contributions to a free, fair and successful General Election, and extends its appreciation for making our task rewarding and pleasurable with the warmth, hospitality and co-operation extended to the CEOM.

The Mission will submit to the Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), H.E. Ambassador Irwin LaRocque, a full Report on the Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Suriname.

**IAN BROWNE
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CARICOM ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION TO SURINAME
PARAMARIBO, SURINAME
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