



CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM) ELECTORAL OBSERVER MISSION TO THE GENERAL ELECTION IN ST. KITTS AND NEVIS, 25 JANUARY 2010

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

This CARICOM Electoral Observer Mission which numbered six persons from the various Member States arrived in St. Kitts and Nevis for the purpose of observing the General Election that was conducted on 25 January 2010.

The team was deployed in eight (8) constituencies across St. Kitts. However given the smallness of our number no representative was deployed to the three (3) constituencies on the island of Nevis. Prior to Poll Day the Team met with officials and interest groups, attended political meetings and spoke with citizens in order to solicit their views about the elections. They all indicated their readiness for the elections. On the eve of the elections, the Mission had the privilege of witnessing the activities of the Electoral Office leading up to the distribution of supplies to Returning Officers. Added to this the seventy-one (71) polling stations on St. Kitts were visited by members of the Team for their suitability and general appropriateness.

The Team was out on Poll Day well before the polling stations were opened to witness the opening of the polls, the voting process, the closing of the polls and remained long hours after the close of Poll journeying to the central locations set up in each constituency to witness the count. The Mission is pleased to put on record that the count was conducted in a transparent manner in that all stakeholders and observers: local, regional, and international were given approval to witness the count.

It was truly remarkable that the long delays experienced by some at polling locations where the electorate was dense did not deter the voters from exercising their franchise. They showed up at the polls, even as it rained in order to elect the government of their choice and despite some of their earlier concerns expressed to the Mission regarding the voters' list, the re-confirmation of voters and voter education to name a few, voting was conducted in a peaceful and incident free manner. The Mission must commend the citizens of St. Kitts and Nevis for displaying their commitment to the democratic process.

In assessing the conduct of the Poll, the CARICOM Electoral Observer Mission wishes to state that voters in St. Kitts and Nevis were able to cast their ballots without intimidation or harassment which augured well for the conduct of an orderly and peaceful election. However, there were concerns about certain aspects of the election process which will be addressed in the Report. On this note the Mission extends sincere appreciation to all for the cooperation and warm welcome which made it possible for them to discharge their duties efficiently.

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