



## **CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM) ELECTORAL OBSERVER MISSION TO ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES - PRELIMINARY STATEMENT ON THE GENERAL ELECTIONS OF 13 DECEMBER 2010**

At the invitation of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) mounted a twelve (12) member Observer Mission to the General Elections of Monday, 13 December 2010.

The Mission was tasked with the responsibility of observing the preparations for the elections, the comportment of electoral officials and political stakeholders, and to observe the electoral process, including the conduct of the poll and the counting of the ballots. On the basis of these observations, the Mission was mandated to assess the outcome of the Elections and its impact on the political environment in the country.

In the execution of its functions, the Core Group of the CARICOM Electoral Observer Mission comprising the Chief of Mission, the Deputy Chief of Mission and a CARICOM Secretariat staff met, upon arrival, with the Deputy Prime Minister, the Honourable Louis Straker, the Minister responsible for Electoral Matters, the Honourable Rene Baptiste, the Leader of Opposition, Honourable Arnhim Eustace and held extensive discussions with leaders and representatives of all three (3) political parties.

Meetings were also held with the Supervisor of Elections, Ms. Sylvia Findlay-Scrubb, the Commissioner of Police (ag.), Mr. Bertie Pompey, members of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Local Observer Group, the National Monitoring and Consultative Mechanism (NMCM).

Consultations were also held with members of the Organisation of American States (OAS) and the Commonwealth Observer Groups. Prior to Polling Day, the Core Team travelled to the island of Bequia in the Northern Grenadines where nine (9) of the ten (10) buildings identified as Polling Stations were visited.

On Polling Day, the twelve (12) members of the Observer Mission were deployed in six (6) teams consisting of two (2) members each, to the thirteen (13) constituencies on mainland St. Vincent. The Teams were well recognised, accepted and welcomed at the polling stations visited and were able to conduct their observations in an unimpeded manner. The Mission observed the Opening of the Poll, the voting procedures, the close of Poll and the counting of ballots at selected Polling Stations.

Members of the Mission visited approximately 87% (183 of 211) of the Polling Stations on the mainland of St. Vincent and as such were well equipped to make an informed assessment of the electoral process.

The Mission's preliminary assessment is that the preparations for the elections were adequate and that the conditions existed for the free expression of the will of the voters. The weather was favourable and voters turned out in large numbers to cast their ballots early without intimidation or hindrance. They were orderly and exercised patience in cases where they had to wait for some time.

Polling stations opened on time and staff was well trained and prepared for what was to follow. The relevant materials were in place and polling commenced in a peaceful and incident-free manner. The process was managed competently by officials who carried out their duties in a professional and impartial manner. Procedures were fairly consistent and somewhat uniformly followed, the integrity of the voting process was guaranteed and the secrecy of the ballot well-respected and protected.

It is the view of the Mission that the Elections of Monday, 13 December 2010 were conducted in a peaceful manner and the results reflected the will of the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and their commitment to democracy.

The Mission therefore wishes to commend the people of this country for their high level of maturity in ensuring that the Elections were conducted peacefully and in an environment conducive to the expression of the free will of the electorate. The detailed findings and recommendations of the Observer Mission including suggestions for enhancing the Electoral Process will be submitted in the Mission's report to the Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community, H.E. Sir Edwin W. Carrington.

The CARICOM Electoral Observer Mission wishes to express its sincerest thanks to the Government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines for the courtesies and support extended to the Mission during its stay on the islands.

Special mention must be made of the cooperation received from the Office of the Supervisor of Elections, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the acting Commissioner of Police. Mention must also be made of the appreciation of the work of the CARICOM Observer Mission. Our gratitude is also extended to the leaders and representatives of all political parties, civil society, the media and other Observer Groups with whom we held discussions. Finally, expressions of gratitude are also due to the Returning Officers, Presiding Officers, Poll Clerks and the Police Officers, who all contributed in no small measure to the success of the Mission.

On behalf of the Members of the Mission and, as Chief of this CARICOM Electoral Observer Mission, I wish to say thanks to one and all.

CARICOM Electoral Observer Mission  
Kingstown  
St. Vincent and the Grenadines  
Tuesday, 14 December 2010