



## **INTERIM STATEMENT OF THE CARICOM ELECTION OBSERVER MISSION (CEOM) ON THE GENERAL AND REGIONAL ELECTIONS OF GUYANA ON 11 MAY 2015**

Acting on an invitation received from the Government of Guyana, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), through the Secretary General; Ambassador Irwin LaRocque, mounted a 10-member CARICOM Election Observation Mission (CEOM) to observe the General and Regional Elections of Guyana on 11 May 2015.

The CEOM was headed by Mr. Earl Simpson, Deputy Director of Elections, Electoral Office, Jamaica; and Ms. Josephine Tamai, Chief Elections Officer, Elections and Boundaries Department, Belize. Other Members of the Mission comprised officials from the following Member States -

- Antigua and Barbuda;
- The Bahamas;
- Barbados;
- Dominica;
- Saint Lucia;
- St. Vincent and the Grenadines; and
- Trinidad & Tobago.

The Chief and Deputy Chief of Mission arrived in Guyana on Wednesday, 6 May 2015 and the remaining team members arrived on Friday, 8 May 2015. The Chief and Deputy Chief of Mission held meetings with several stakeholders in the Guyanese society which included –

- the President, His Excellency Mr. Donald Ramotar;
- the Commissioner of Police; Guyana Electoral Commission (GECOM);
- the Private Sector Commission;
- the Guyana Human Rights Commission;
- the Guyana Trade Union Congress;
- the Guyana Public Service Union; and
- Political Stakeholders contesting the elections.

The Chief and Deputy Chief of Mission also attended meetings of all local and international observer groups that fielded teams in the elections.

Members of the team who arrived on 8 May 2015 were fully briefed by the Chief and Deputy Chief of Mission on Saturday 9 May 2015. Later that evening, the full team was able to attend a political meeting to get a sense of the political atmosphere on the ground. We are not aware and neither have we been informed of any major election related violence during the campaign period.

### **Deployment of Teams**

On Election Day, team members were deployed to observe the elections in Regions 4, 6 and 10. The team visited a total of 224 polling stations within 87 polling places.

### **Opening of the poll**

Our team members arrived at the polling stations at approximately 5:00 a.m. to observe the opening of the poll process. From our observation there was adequate police presence at the locations. The polling station staff arrived on time with all the necessary election supplies for the conduct of the poll. In the majority of cases, the political party agents of the PPP/C and APNU + AFC were present. The various signage and instructions to the electors were posted. Election Staff carried out the opening of the poll procedures as instructed. All polling stations we observed opened at 6:00 a.m. with lines of enthusiastic voters present.

### **Voting Process**

At the polling stations that we visited, we observed that the polling station staff was properly trained in the execution of their duties. In addition, they were courteous and provided assistance to incapacitated voters. They informed voters of the voting process in an impartial and transparent manner. The voting process was conducted according to the procedures and guidelines outlined by GECOM.

### **Close of Poll**

The team identified polling stations to observe the closing of the poll. We arrived at these polling stations approximately one hour before the polls were scheduled to be closed. At 6:00 p.m.; the polling station staff declared the polling station closed and we observed that they conducted the close of poll in accordance with the procedures and guidelines outlined by GECOM.

### **Counting of Ballots**

After the close of poll procedures the ballot boxes were opened in the presence of the political party agents and observers and the ballots were counted. Again, the polling station staff followed procedures and guidelines outlined by GECOM.

The results of the count were recorded on the Statement of the Poll. All parties present signed the document and copies were given to the political party agents and posted at the entrance of the polling stations.

**Overall impression**

At the polling places and polling stations we visited, electors were able to exercise their franchise in a peaceful and orderly manner and without incidents. We observed no signs of intimidation, harassment, or campaigning to influence or obstruct the democratic process. The election staff performed their duties extremely well and commendations are in order. The police were able to regulate the flow into the polling stations and ensured that the lines remained orderly. They were quite professional in their interaction with the polling station staff, electors and the various political stakeholders.

The voting process was transparent, free and fair. The secrecy of the ballot was protected and respected.

We wish to congratulate the Guyana Electoral Commission for its administration of the electoral process, the political parties and their representatives, for the peaceful and orderly manner in which they conducted themselves on Election Day.

We want to extend our sincere appreciation and heartfelt thanks to the Secretary General of CARICOM and his Staff for inviting us to participate in this Mission and for providing expertise and support for us to fulfil our mandate.

**Conclusion**

In our view, the conduct of the Poll should result in the expression of the will of the people of Guyana. It is our hope that the results will be accepted and respected.

This Interim Statement is meant to provide an initial assessment as we observed the election process. In the coming weeks, a final report will be submitted to the Secretary General of CARICOM setting out our findings and recommendations.

Mr. Earl Simpson  
Chief of Mission  
CARICOM Election Observation Mission  
12 May 2015