

MEDIA RELEASE

Commonwealth Assessment Mission's Visit Dubbed "Successful"

13.12.2005.

"Successful" is how Ms. Juliet Solomon, Special Advisor Caribbean in the Political Affairs Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat described the recent visit Commonwealth Assessment Mission to Guyana. Ms. Solomon, who was a member of the Mission, made this disclosure during a final briefing session with Dr. Steve Surujbally, Chairman of the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) on Friday, December 9, 2005 at the Commission's Headquarters.

The Commonwealth Assessment Mission was in Guyana on a four-day visit, at the directive of the Commonwealth Secretary-General in response to an invitation from the Government of Guyana for the Commonwealth Secretariat to monitor upcoming elections. The Mission was tasked with conducting an evaluation of whether it would be necessary for the Secretariat to send an Observer Group to monitor General and Regional elections. In this regard, the Mission was required to focus attention on (i) arrangements for Observers; (ii) whether there would be broad support for the presence of Commonwealth Observers; (iii) the current Continuous Registration exercise; and (iv) to make initial organizational arrangements.

Upon completion of the evaluation, the Mission will report its findings to the Commonwealth Secretary-General who will then decide whether a Commonwealth Observer Group will be constituted to monitor the upcoming General and Regional Elections in Guyana.

Ms. Solomon reported that, during the visit, the Mission met with representatives of Parliamentary and non-Parliamentary Political Parties, Civil Society Organisations and the Donor Agencies. She noted that they all gave the assurance that they were committed to contributing towards a free, fair, transparent and acceptable election process.

Mr. Robert Jordan, Election Expert with substantial experience in Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia and Member of the Mission, who also participated at the final briefing session, reported that, apart from meeting with senior staff of the GECOM Secretariat, he had visited Registration Offices in Registration Districts 4, 5 and 6. He lauded the level of professionalism and cooperation that was displayed by the GECOM staff in during his interactions with them.

Dr. Surujbally expressed GECOM's and his personal gratitude to the Mission, and to HE Rt Hon Donald C. McKinnon, Commonwealth Secretary-General, for the continued contributions aimed at aiding the elections process in Guyana. He is optimistic that the Mission's Report will be favourable to the constitution and delegation of a Commonwealth Observer Mission to monitor the upcoming elections.

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