

Acknowledgements

We wish to record our appreciation to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Don McKinnon, for constituting this Observer Group and to acknowledge and thank the many people who helped us during the course of our time in Guyana.

We are especially grateful for the assistance of the Chairman of the Guyana Elections Commission, Major-General (Rtd) Joseph Singh, and the staff of the Commission. We appreciate the co-operation of the Commissioner of Police, Mr Laurie Lewis, and his officers. We thank the political parties, non-governmental organisations and others who briefed us in Georgetown and during our deployment, and the domestic and other international observers with whom we worked closely in the field. They were all generous with their time. Without our drivers we would not have been able to accomplish this mission and we are grateful to them for their help.

We also wish to place on record our appreciation for the help and support from the dedicated staff of the Commonwealth Secretariat, without whom we could not have fulfilled our mandate.

Above all, we thank the people of Guyana for their kindness. They are a wonderful people, they deserve a bright future in a vibrant democracy.

ANNEX I

Composition of the Commonwealth Observer Group

Mr Ieremia Tabai (Kiribati – Chairperson)

Mr Ieremia Tabai was Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum from 1992 to 1997 and President of his country, Kiribati, from 1979 to 1990. He is now Member of Parliament for the island of Nonouti, Kiribati. Mr Tabai was first elected to the National Parliament in 1974 and was re-elected in 1977, 1982, 1983, 1987 and 1991 when he had to resign his office as Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Development to take up his position as Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum.

Ms Rindai Chipfunde (Zimbabwe)

Ms Rindai Chipfunde is the National Co-ordinator, and one of the founder members, of the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), a network of 36 NGOs, which organised the domestic observers at the Zimbabwe general election in June 2000. She is the co-author of an election monitors' and trainers' manual produced for the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Ms Chipfunde was formerly the Country Co-ordinator for the Southern Africa Human Rights NGO Network (SAHRINGON) and the Programmes Co-ordinator for ZimRights, both human rights NGOs. In 1999 Ms Chipfunde was a delegate to the Malawi General Elections Study Mission under the National Democratic Institute. Prior to this she was an Assistant Director in Zimbabwe's Public Service Commission.

Ms France Demianenko (Canada)

Ms France Demianenko has been Deputy Director, International Services, Elections Canada since 1993. She is responsible for managing observation and evaluations of international elections as well as providing expert assistance, advice and co-ordination. In 2000, Ms Demianenko was Senior Adviser to the Chief Electoral Officer, and co-ordinated all activities relating to the 27 November 2000 federal elections in Canada. Before her appointment as Deputy Director, International Services, she held a variety of positions, including, from 1992 to 1993, Executive Assistant to the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada and between 1987 and 1992 Auditor with the Department of Transport Canada.

Mr Dayananda Dissanayake (Sri Lanka)

Mr Dayananda Dissanayake has been Commissioner of Elections in Sri Lanka since 1995 and has been responsible for conducting three island-wide national elections during this time. He has served 26 years in Sri Lanka's Department of Elections, having joined in 1975 after five years in the Provincial Administration Service. Mr Dissanayake has been a member of the Executive Board of the Association of Asian Election Authorities since 1998 and was a Commonwealth Observer in South Africa in 1994.

Mrs Leela Dookun Luchoomun, MP (Mauritius)

Mrs Leela Dookun Luchoomun has been a Member of Parliament in Mauritius since the general election in 2000 and is Parliamentary Private Secretary attached to the National Development Unit of the Ministry of Local Government. Mrs Dookun Luchoomun is the only female among the 10 Parliamentary Private Secretaries. She is responsible for all infrastructural and social development in two of the 21 constituencies in Mauritius.

Lady Carol Kidu, MP (Papua New Guinea)

Lady Carol Kidu is Member of Parliament for Moresby South, Papua New Guinea. She is also the Chairperson of a Special Parliamentary Committee on Urbanisation and Social Development, which has undertaken the task of devising policies and strategies to address the negative impact of rapid urbanisation and to ensure a better future for dispossessed urban indigenous landowners. She was previously Shadow Minister for Human Resources. Before entering politics in 1997, Lady Kidu was a secondary school teacher and textbook writer and then a Research Officer on Ministerial staff.

Hon Simon Mwila, MP (Zambia)

Mr Simon Mwila is Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Zambia and has been Member of Parliament for the Kasama constituency since November 1991. Prior to entering politics in 1991 Mr Mwila, a Member of the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy, was Personnel Manager for the then Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines Ltd (1978-86). He has significant election observation experience, all sponsored by the Association of Western European Parliamentarians Against Apartheid, in Malawi (1993), Mozambique (1994), South Africa (1994) and the United Republic of Tanzania (1995).

Ms Florizelle O'Connor (Jamaica)

Ms Florizelle O'Connor is an independent human rights consultant focusing on human rights practices in the developing world. She is currently on a two-year assignment as human rights consultant to the Ministry of National Security and Justice. Ms O'Connor was the Co-ordinator of the Jamaica Council for Human Rights for 17 years, in which capacity she campaigned against capital punishment and was responsible for forming Caribbean Lifelines, a group that lobbies against the death penalty in Jamaica, and the formation of the London Panel of Solicitors, a group of over 40 law firms in the UK that provides *pro bono* legal representation for Jamaican cases taken to the Privy Council in London. She also facilitated the formation of Caribbean Rights, a group that works to raise awareness of human rights violations in the Caribbean region.

Mr Brian Pearson (United Kingdom)

Mr Brian Pearson is Administrator of the United Kingdom Association of Election Administrators and former Election Officer for Leicester, UK. In the latter capacity he was responsible for preparing the register of electors for three parliamentary constituencies and 28 local government areas, and for organising all national and local elections in the City and for the Leicester

European Parliamentary Constituency. Mr Pearson has observed elections in Angola, Armenia, Bangladesh, Bosnia, Lesotho, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Romania and South Africa.

Mr Cecil Ryan (St Vincent and the Grenadines)

Mr Cecil Ryan is the Co-ordinator of the National Alliance of Development Organisations, Managing Director of Projects Promotion Ltd, President of the Caribbean People's Development Agency and President of the Government Employees' Co-operative Credit Union Ltd. He was a candidate for the United People's Movement (UPM) in the St Vincent and the Grenadines general election in 1984, and has been observing his country's electoral processes since then. Mr Ryan conducted an opinion poll during the 1998 general election campaign in St Vincent and the Grenadines. He has been observing the electoral process this year and conducted an opinion poll prior to the 2001 general election.

Mr Phil Whelan (New Zealand)

Mr Phil Whelan was Chief Electoral Officer in New Zealand, in which capacity he was responsible for the management of the 1993, 1996 and 1999 general elections and a number of referendums in New Zealand. His tenure saw a period of significant electoral reform, with 1996 being the first elections conducted under a proportional voting system (MMP). Mr Whelan also served two terms as a member of the Representative Commission, which sets electoral boundaries in New Zealand, and he has represented New Zealand at many international conferences.

Secretariat Support Staff

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Ms Judith Pestaina | <i>Team Leader</i> |
| Ms Cheryl Dorall | <i>Media Adviser</i> |
| Mr Christopher Child | <i>Assistant to Observers</i> |
| Mr Chuks Ihekaibeya | <i>Assistant to Observers</i> |
| Mr Guy Hewitt | <i>Assistant to Observers</i> |
| Dr Jackie Dugard | <i>Assistant to Observers</i> |
| Ms Zippy Ojago | <i>Administrative Assistant</i> |

Arrival Statement, 12 March 2001



Commonwealth Observer Group

Guyana General and Regional Elections, 19 March 2001

Tel: 00 592 22 57775
Fax: 00 592 22 57666

Main Street Plaza Hotel
45 Main Street
Georgetown
Guyana

News Release

ARRIVAL STATEMENT BY MR IEREMIA TABAI CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP

It is only right that my first task as Chairperson of this Commonwealth Observer Group should be to explain to the people of Guyana the purpose of our visit here and the way we intend to go about our work.

I say that because this is your country, these are your elections, and we are here because your political parties want us to be here. The Commonwealth Secretary-General established our Group because your Government invited him to constitute such a Group and your political parties agreed that we should come. An Assessment Mission was sent to Guyana by the Secretary-General specifically to consult them on this. In short, we are here because your process wants us to be here. We will abide by your law. And, above all, we will respect your people. We hope to meet many of you. We will certainly travel extensively, consult widely and take every opportunity to see the process for ourselves.

We will not interfere in the process. At every stage we will act with neutrality, impartiality, objectivity and independence. Each of us participates in our individual capacities. We represent the whole Commonwealth, rather than the countries from which we have come. We are independent of our governments, independent of any organisations to which we belong, independent of the Commonwealth Secretary-General, and most certainly independent of any political force in this country.

Our concern is purely with the electoral process. We have no interest in who wins. Our mandate is to:

- consider the various factors impinging on the credibility of the electoral process as a whole;
- determine in our own judgement whether the conditions exist for a free expression of will by the electors; and
- determine if the results of the elections reflect the wishes of the people.

In order to make that judgement, we will aim to arrive at a broad overview of the process. We will not be able to be present at every polling station or counting centre, but we hope that we will be able to take a representative sample.

Our immediate priority is to be briefed on arrangements for the elections. We will therefore be meeting with the Elections Commission this morning, before we see anyone else. Tomorrow we will meet political parties and on Wednesday non-governmental organisations and others. On Thursday we will deploy around the country to begin our observation on the ground. After we have witnessed the immediate pre-election period, the campaigning and the media, we will observe the polling itself and the counting of votes. We will then return to Georgetown to consider our report, which we will write here and sign before we depart, which is due to be on 23 or 24 March. Two representatives of the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Commonwealth Secretariat staff, will remain here for a short period after we have left.

When we leave we will submit our report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, who will in turn forward it to the Government of Guyana, the Elections Commission, the leadership of all the political parties taking part in the elections and then to all Commonwealth governments. The report will be made publicly available, here and throughout the Commonwealth.

12 March 2001

ANNEX III

Schedule of Engagements

Monday, 12 March

- 1000 Arrival Press Conference, Main Street Plaza Hotel
1100 Briefing by Guyana Elections Commission: Mr J G Singh (Chairman) and Mr Gocool Boodoo (Chief Elections Officer)
1430 Briefing by Advance Group: Mr Dayananda Dissanayake and Mr Chuks Ihekaibeya
1545 Initial deployment discussion
1700 Commonwealth Youth Programme Reception for Commonwealth Day, Tower Hotel

During the day members of the Group also observed voting by the 'Disciplined Forces'

Tuesday, 13 March

- 0900 People's Progressive Party/Civic: Mr Donald Ramotar (General Secretary), Dr Bheri S Ramsaran (PPP/C Elections Agent), Mr Henry Jeffrey, Dr Lesley Ramsammy, Ms Gail Teixeira
1000 People's National Congress/Reform: Mr Oscar Clarke (General Secretary), Ms Deborah Backer (member, PNC Central Executive), Mr Joseph Hamilton (PNC/R candidate), Mr Jerome Khan (Chairman, Reform) and Mr Eric Phillips (Deputy Leader, Reform)
1100 Working People's Alliance/Guyana Action Party: Dr Rupert Roopnaraine (GAP-WPA Prime Ministerial candidate, Co-Leader WPA), Mr Desmond Trotman (WPA Election Agent), Ms Sheila Holder (GAP-WPA candidate) and Ms Jocelyn Dow (former member of Guyana Elections Commission)
1200 Guyana Democratic Party: Mr Asgar Ally (Leader) and Mr Hilbert Archer (Campaign Manager)
1400 Justice for All Party: Mr Sherwood Kendall (Executive Member)
1515 Rise Organise And Rebuild (ROAR): Mr Ravi Dev (Leader), Mr Malcolm Harripant (Elections Agent), Mr Charles Sugrim (Executive Member), Mr S Nausrudeen (Campaign Manager) and Mr Naresh Raghubeer (Adviser)
1700 Deployment Briefing: Christopher Child and Dr Jackie Dugard

The United Force was also invited to send a representative. It declined the invitation, but said that it would be prepared to meet Commonwealth Observers at its office

Wednesday, 14 March

- 0900 Non-Governmental Organisations: Mr David Yhann, Ms Fazeel Ferouz and Mr Sultan Rahaman (NGO Forum), Mr Lincoln Lewis (General Secretary, Trades Union Congress), Mr Andrew Garnett (Principal Assistant Secretary, TUC) and Ms Maureen Walcott-Fortune (TUC), Mr Michael McCormack (Co-President, Human Rights Association) and Mr Salim October (Board Member, Youth Challenge Guyana)
- 1045 Commonwealth High Commissioners: HE Mr Jacques Crete (High Commissioner, Canada) and HE Mr Edward Glover (High Commissioner, United Kingdom)
- 1200 Other Observers: Mr Simon Osborn (Co-ordinator, Long-Term Observer Group), Ms Melene Scipio (CARICOM Observer Group), Ms Sue Nelson (Co-ordinator, Carter Centre Observer Group) and Father Malcolm Rodrigues (Chairman, Electoral Assistance Bureau)
- 1415 Media Briefing: Mr Sharief Khan (Editor, Chronicle), Mr David De Caires (Managing Director, Stabroek News), Mr Dwight Whyllie and Mr Harry Myers (Independent Media Monitoring Panel), Mr Martin Gulsaram (Guyana TV) and Mr Adam Harris (Editor, Prime News)
- 1515 Amerindian Organisations: Mr Peter Persaud (President, The Amerindian Action Movement of Guyana), Ms Pamela Mendonca (Secretary, TAAMOG), Ms Jean La Rose (Programme Administrator, Amerindian People's Association), Mr Allan Leow (Secretary, Guyanese Organisation of Indigenous Peoples) and Ms Marie Greene (Women Across Differences)
- 1615 Women's Organisations: Ms Jocelyn Dow (Red Thread and Women's Millennium Caucus), Ms Vanda Radzik (Red Thread), Ms Hazel Halley-Burnet (Women's Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Human Services and Social Security), Ms Marie Greene, Ms Magda Pollard and Ms Helen Amsterdam (Women Across Differences), Ms Sheila Chapman (Women's Millennium Caucus/Guyana Association of Women Lawyers), Ms Carol Innis-Baptiste, Ms Pamela Northe and Ms Isha Hussain-Singh (Help and Shelter), Ms Roxanne George (Guyana Association of Women Lawyers) and Ms Bibi Andrews (Rural Women's Network)
- 1730 Police: Mr Laurie Lewis (Commissioner of Police), Mr Floyd McDonald (Deputy Commissioner), Mr Winston Felix (Acting Deputy Commissioner), Mr Eddington Tappin (Assistant Commissioner), Mr Asmanalli (Assistant Commissioner), Mr David Ramosius (Assistant Superintendent)
- 1900 Chairperson's Reception

Deployment of Commonwealth Observers

| Team | Base Location |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Mr Tabai Ms Pestaina | Main Street Plaza Hotel Georgetown |
| Ms Demianenko Ms Dorall | Main Street Plaza Hotel Georgetown |
| Mr Pearson Mr Ihekaibeya | Main Street Plaza Hotel Georgetown |
| Ms O'Connor Mr Dissanayake | Barrow Hotel Linden |
| Mr Ryan Ms Chipfunde | Savannah Inn Lethem |
| Lady Carol Kidu Mr Hewitt | Government Guest House Mabaruma |
| Mrs Dookun Luchoomun Mr Whelan | Riverton Suites Skeldon |
| Mr Mwila Dr Dugard | Arabian Atlantic Hotel Anna Regina |

Observation Notes and Check List for Polling Station Visits

OBSERVATION NOTES FOR POLL AND COUNT

PART A

The Observers may focus particular attention on the following aspects of the conduct of the election:

THE CAMPAIGN

1. Balance of TV/radio election coverage and extent and nature of access by party and other candidates.
2. Print media: nature of coverage and extent of access by the political parties
3. The tone and content of material put out by the candidates, access to printing facilities
4. The conduct of political meetings/rallies (permits for public meetings?)
5. The conduct of house-to-house canvassing of voters.
6. Nature, scale and effectiveness of voter education on radio and television, in the print media and by other methods.
7. Activities/measures to encourage the participation of women
8. Access to funds and sources of funds

THE POLL

1. The location of polling stations
2. Distances travelled by voters to polling booths, particularly in rural areas.
3. The procedure followed at the opening of the poll, including voter identification.
4. The length of time voters wait to cast their votes.
5. The adequacy or otherwise of facilities at polling stations and their state of readiness.
6. Availability of adequate supplies, e.g. ballot papers, official stamps and stamp pads etc
7. The performance of electoral officials at the polling stations visited

8. The procedures in place to ensure proper security of ballot papers, ballot boxes and official seals
9. Arrangements to facilitate voting by women
10. The steps taken to ensure that the secrecy of the ballot is assured.
11. The general atmosphere at the polling stations visited.
12. Access of party agents and domestic observers to polling stations
13. Whether illiterate voters are assured of a vote in secret
14. Whether the security of ballot boxes in transit is assured.

THE COUNT

1. Inspection of seals
2. The process of reconciling the number of people who voted with the number of ballots in the boxes
3. The determination of invalid ballots
4. The facilities for party agents and their representatives to witness and verify the count and overall transparency
5. Access by domestic and international observers
6. The conduct of election officers.

PART B

Questions that may be put and which you may ask yourself:

1. Was the Voters' Register compiled in a satisfactory way? Were people missed out? Were the names of dead people or "phantom voters" included?
2. Who are the election officials? How were they chosen? Are voters confident that they will be impartial?
3. Is the person in the street satisfied with arrangements? Will he/she vote? If not, is he/she afraid to do so? Were there any attempts to discourage/encourage the participation of women and were they effective?
4. Have all parties been able to campaign freely? Has the campaign been free of intimidation etc? Have all parties had full access to the mass media?
5. Is there freedom to advertise and distribute posters, leaflets etc?

ON POLLING DAY

1. Before polling starts, are the ballot boxes empty? Are they properly sealed? Are all procedures being adhered to?
2. Are all the parties/candidates represented at polling stations? Are they satisfied with the process?
3. Are the voters apparently voting freely? Are they enthusiastic? Do they talk freely? Do they exhibit signs of fear or intimidation?
4. Do voters understand the procedures properly? If not, are the procedures being explained fully and impartially? Are attempts being made to suggest how voters should vote?
5. Does the turnout indicate that women have been deterred from attending to vote?
6. Is only one person at a time being allowed into the voting compartment?
7. How long are voters waiting to vote? If a long time, are some being put off?
8. Will all parties be represented at the polling centres throughout voting and the count? Are agents adequately trained and vigilant?

9. Will domestic and foreign observers have free access to all stages of the process?
10. Is the security presence effective/oppressive?
11. Were the proper procedures followed at the end of day one? Were they properly followed at the start of day two?

THE COUNT

1. Are the boxes kept safe until opened? Are all parties present at the opening?
2. Does the number of used ballot papers tally with the record of those who voted?
3. Are the papers counted properly? Are counting agents present? Are they satisfied with the procedures of the count?
4. Are the proper procedures followed for declaring votes as invalid?
5. Is the result of the count posted on the wall of the polling station?

GUYANA GENERAL AND REGIONAL ELECTIONS
19 March 2001

CHECKLIST FOR POLLING STATION VISITS

Team Member(s):

District:

Polling Station:

Time of Arrival:

Time of Departure:

Voters in Queue: Rate of Processing:

1. **Opening of Poll**

| | | | |
|--|--------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | On time? No/Yes | Procedures followed? No/Yes | All materials? No/yes? |
| | Details: _____ | | |
2. **Register**

| | |
|--|--|
| | State of the register? Are voters on it? Are parties complaining? Details: _____ |
|--|--|
3. **Layout and Facilities**

| | | |
|--|---|-----------------------|
| | What forms of ID are being accepted? What is impact on numbers voting? What do participants in the process say? Details? | Good? Adequate? Poor? |
|--|---|-----------------------|
4. **Polling Staff**

| | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| | Efficient? Satisfactory? Poor? |
|--|--------------------------------|
5. **Security Presence**

| | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| | Discreet? Intrusive? Oppressive? |
|--|----------------------------------|

6. **Complaints by Party Agents**

| | | |
|--|---|-------------------------|
| | Are Party Agents present? Any complaints? No/Yes | Which parties? Details: |
|--|---|-------------------------|
7. **Complaints by Voters**

| | | |
|--|--------|----------|
| | No/Yes | Details: |
|--|--------|----------|
8. **Presence of unauthorised persons**

| | | |
|--|--------|----------|
| | No/Yes | Details: |
|--|--------|----------|
9. **Atmosphere at Station?**

| | | |
|--|--------------------------|--|
| | Orderly? Tense? Chaotic? | |
|--|--------------------------|--|
10. **Secrecy of Ballot**

| | | |
|--|--------------------------|--|
| | Assured? Poor? Uncertain | |
|--|--------------------------|--|
11. **Voting**

| | | |
|-----|---|--------|
| (a) | Personation attempts alleged: Details: | No/Yes |
| (b) | Multiple voting attempts alleged: Details: | No/Yes |
| (c) | Women deterred from voting: Details: | No/Yes |
| (d) | Is the voting procedure (dye, stamping ballots etc) being followed? | No/Yes |
12. **200 Yard Limit – is it being observed**

| | | |
|--|--------|--|
| | No/Yes | |
|--|--------|--|
13. **Closing of Poll**

| | | |
|--|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | On time? Procedure followed? | Numbers still in queue? No/Yes |
|--|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
13. **The Count**

| | | |
|--|--|--------|
| | Are procedures being observed? Detail: | No/Yes |
|--|--|--------|
14. **Post Count**

| | | |
|--|----------------------|--------|
| | Procedures followed? | No/Yes |
|--|----------------------|--------|
15. **Apparent fairness overall**

| | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--|
| | Good? Acceptable? Questionable? | |
|--|---------------------------------|--|
16. **Other Comments**

Interim Statement, 20 March 2001

COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP **Guyana General and Regional Elections - 19 March 2001**

INTERIM STATEMENT BY CHAIRPERSON MR IEREMIA TABAI MP

We are issuing the following statement to indicate our preliminary view of the process we have been observing.

In many ways this was a good election:

- the turnout was high and the voters themselves, especially the young people, were eager to exercise their democratic rights; strenuous efforts were made to ensure that those who were on the register were able to vote, even if they did not receive their National Identification Cards in time; the process was peaceful and security arrangements were good;
- the secrecy of the ballot was assured; the polling stations were well-organised, the voting system was relatively straightforward, the polling station staff were well trained, displayed a high level of commitment and were present in adequate numbers; there were some problems with the delivery of materials in some places early on election day, but generally the necessary items were present – a feat which required a massive logistical effort;
- the count was both thorough and transparent.

We also acknowledge the great efforts by the Elections Commission to ensure that the elections were held within the designated timeframe. However:

- there were clearly errors in the Voter's List and shortcomings in the system which produced it; as a result people who should have been able to vote were not able to do so; it remains to be seen how extensive the errors and shortcomings were;
- we note the confusing sequence of events which began with the announcement at 6.00 pm on election day - the exact moment at which the polling stations were due to close - that the stations would remain open until a time to be determined by the Commission; exacerbated by communications difficulties it created uncertainty and inconsistencies as darkness fell and the count was due to begin;
- we note that the shortcomings of the process were by no means confined to the events of polling day itself. We wish to highlight in particular the performance of elements of the media in the run up to these elections, which in several cases left a great deal to be desired.

We have yet to observe the completion of the results process: we note how slow it has been.

We believe that before the next election the Commission should review all aspects of its election management arrangements, ensuring that the lessons of 1997 and 2001 are learnt and that the appropriate action is taken. At the same time, the shortcomings to which we have referred are regrettable in that they have obscured the positive and praiseworthy aspects of the process. We will now prepare our report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, including our final conclusions on the process. We wish the people of Guyana well in the days to come.

Georgetown
20 March 2001

Media inquiries to Cheryl Dorall (624 2445)

Departure Statement, 24 March 2001

COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP **Guyana General and Regional Elections - 19 March 2001**

DEPARTURE STATEMENT BY CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP, MR IEREMIA TABAI

We leave Guyana today, having observed the campaign, the preparations for the election, the polling, the counting of votes and the results process. Part of our Observer Group has been here since 26 February; one member of the Group and two Commonwealth Secretariat staff members will remain here for a short period as representatives of the Commonwealth Secretary-General.

We hope that our report will make a small but positive contribution to what we trust will be a bright future for this country. We are sure that the Commonwealth will continue to take a keen and constructive interest in that future and that it will continue to respond to any requests for assistance.

As we said in our Interim Statement, in many ways this was a good election. Since we made that Statement we have seen more of the results process. It has been very slow. Together with the errors in the Voters' List that has detracted from otherwise praiseworthy arrangements. We hope that before the next election better arrangements can be put in place. However, we have no reason to change the overall assessment we made in our Interim Report. While there is clearly a great deal of work to be done to improve election arrangements for the future, we believe that these elections provide a basis for Guyana to go forward.

At the same time, we are acutely conscious that however important elections are they are only part of a much deeper process. We believe that Guyana will only be able to go forward if it can transcend its still largely ethnic politics and find a way to build inclusiveness and unity. That is the pre-eminent challenge before the people and institutions of this country. We wish the people of Guyana well as they face this central challenge.

Media enquiries: Christopher Child
Mobile 624 2443

Georgetown
24 March 2001

Media Code of Conduct

A MEDIA CODE OF CONDUCT

*for reporting and coverage of
Elections in Guyana in 2001*

Agreed to on 9th October 2000 at the "Media Code of Conduct Roundtable" at Le Meridien Pegasus, Old Seawall Road, Georgetown, and signed by: Andaiye, Mark Bhagwandin, Anthony Calder, Hugh Cholmondeley, Rockliff Christie, Karen Davis, David De Caires, David De Groot, Patrick Denny, Omar Farouk, Martin Goolsaran, Alex Graham, David Granger, Albert Henry, Catherine Hughes, Julia Johnson, Sharief Khan, Prem Misir, Kit Nascimento, Compton Peters, Abraham Poole, Khrishna Ramdhani, Rudy Saul, Lalan Shewcharan, Savitree Singh, Henry Skerret and Colin Smith.

I. PREAMBLE

Given the desirability for a fair, peaceful and well-regulated election and the avoidance of the aggravation of ethnic tension and unnecessary political discord,

We agree and accept that a Code of Conduct for the Media - taken to mean newspapers and radio and television stations - generally respected and observed, will contribute to the holding of a free and fair election.

We agree to accept, to subscribe to, and, to the very best of our ability, to comply with this Code of Conduct and to take all reasonable steps to ensure its observance.

We accept and subscribe to this Code of Conduct on the clear and unqualified understanding that the government or any of its agencies and the Elections Commission, will not impose nor seek to impose any prior restraint or censorship on any publication by the media.

II. THE CODE OF CONDUCT

1. The Media in its coverage and reporting of the elections during the period of campaigning agree:
 - i. to refrain from the publishing or broadcasting of any matter with the potential for, or likely to promote or incite racial hatred, bias or contempt or any matter with the potential for, or likely to, promote or cause public disorder, pose or become a threat to the security of the nation;
 - ii. to refrain from ridiculing, stigmatising or demonising people on the basis of gender, race, class, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation and physical or mental ability;
 - iii. to hold themselves independent and free of any, or all, government and political opposition control and direction;
 - iv. to hold themselves independent and free of any, or all, control and direction from any of the political parties officially registered to contest the elections;
 - v. to hold themselves free of any, or all, control and direction from any individual, group, or organisation representing or promoting the special interests of any of the political parties officially registered to contest the elections.

2. The Media in the exercise of their constitutional right of free expression, and in recognition of their consequential social responsibility to the society which they serve, will at all times endeavour to:

- i. provide a truthful, comprehensive, accurate, balanced and fair account of events in a context which gives them meaning;
- ii. serve as a forum for the exchange of public comment, opinion, discussion and criticism in a balanced and reasonable manner;
- iii. offer an accurate picture of the constituent groups, organisations and parties contesting the elections and of the society in general;
- iv. present and clarify, as far as possible, the goals and values of the constituent groups, organisations and parties contesting the elections and of the society in general.

3. The Media, in accepting the principle of "fair and balanced" reporting, recognise that:

- i. No story is fair, if it omits facts of major importance or significance and is therefore incomplete;
- ii. No story is fair, if it includes essentially irrelevant information, rumour or unsubstantiated statements at the expense of significant facts;
- iii. No story is fair, if it consciously or unconsciously misleads or even deceives the reader, listener or viewer.

4. The Media, in accepting the principle of "accuracy and balance" in reporting, particularly during periods of campaigning for elections, acknowledge that these two main characteristics, accuracy and balance, seek to distinguish good journalism from bad, and journalism from propaganda. From this perspective, we accept that:

- **Accuracy** requires the verification (to the fullest extent possible) and presentation of all facts that are pertinent and necessary to understand a particular event or issue, even if some of the facts conflict with a journalist's, or a broadcaster's particular beliefs and feelings;
- **Balance**, or impartiality, requires the presentation of all the main points of view or interpretations of an event or an issue, regardless of whether the journalist, reporter, broadcaster, editor or the audience agrees with these views.

5. The Media further acknowledge that both these ingredients - accuracy and balance - are necessary for citizens to gain a full and realistic picture of the issues during election campaigns, as well as of the world around them. Democracy, which requires the active participation of informed citizens, depends on journalists and broadcasters to keep citizens informed about major issues.

6. The Media accept that omitting relevant facts and points of view from the reporting of major issues of public interest inevitably distorts the view of reality a journalist, reporter or broadcaster presents and so misleads and misinforms the public.

7. The Media acknowledge that the deliberate distortion of reality so as to lead the public to a particular understanding of events and issues, without regard for reality can poison the processes of democracy.

8. The Media support the establishing of an independent Elections Media Monitoring and Refereeing Panel with the requisite resources empowered to monitor and receive complaints and pronounce on the performance of the media. The Media agree to publish the findings of the panel on all complaints received by it.

III. GUIDELINES

These GUIDELINES were examined on 1st November 2000 at the "Draft Guidelines: Media Code of Conduct Roundtable" at Le Meridien Pegasus, Old Seawall Road, Georgetown. This Roundtable was attended by Mark Benschop, Anthony Calder, Andrew Carmichael, Hugh Cholmondéley, Rockliff Christie, Dennis Cuffy, Karen Davis, David de Caires, David DeGroot, Patrick Denny, Omar Farouk, Martin Goolsarran, Alex Graham, David Granger, Nicole Griffith, Adam Harris, Catherine Hughes, Mike James, Glenn Lall, Margaret Lawrence, Marie Maltais, Prem Misir, Roger Moore, Kit Nascimento, Rawle Nelson, Abraham Poole, Christopher Ram, Lalan Shewcharan, Savitree Singh, Colin Smith, Oneidge Waldron, Bert Wilkinson, Vivian Williams and Enrico Woolford.

1. "Inciting Racial Hatred and Promoting Public Disorder."

Media organisations may not censor, or edit any material or materials submitted by political parties, or their agents, for either free, or paid for, publication in newspapers or broadcast on radio or television stations.

However, media organisations observing the law and exercising editorial judgment in favour of good taste and a respect for public safety and decency, should refuse any material submitted by political parties, or their agents, likely to be hateful, ethnically offensive, to promote public disorder or threaten the security of the State.

In all cases of such refusal, the concerned political party must be immediately informed of the reasons for rejection, and, assuming that time permits, the concerned party, or its agent, must be given the opportunity to modify the rejected material in order to conform to acceptable legal, moral and other standards.

The media shall not publish or broadcast any report, which, by its content, carries a clear risk of inciting ethnic hatred or political disorder without having the accuracy and authenticity of the report confirmed by at least 2 (two) independent sources.

2. "Free space and time for political parties AFTER Nomination Day."

In the period *after* Nomination Day, and in the interest of even-handed treatment for all political parties, the media agree to make available an equal amount of free space and time for all political parties that have met the legal criteria for contesting the election.

Print and broadcast media will make available, free of charge, their technical facilities such as layout and printing, basic studio, audio and video recordings for the production and presentation of articles and programmes, but not including the provision of editing, talent, or outside production or broadcast facilities, or reproduction and distribution for use by any other media organisation.

3. "Equal access to Paid Political Advertising."

Media organisations acknowledge their obligation to provide equal access and opportunity to all political parties without discrimination, to purchase space in newspapers and prime time on radio and television stations to promote their respective views during the period of electioneering.

In this regard, the media will make available to contesting political parties full information about space and time availability for advertising and their published advertising rates to be available to all public relations firms, advertising agencies and the proposed Independent Elections Media Monitoring and Refereeing Panel to be established for the purpose of monitoring adherence to the Code of Conduct and these Guidelines.

4. "News Reports and Current Affairs programmes."

All media organisations agree that news reports and current affairs programmes may, at any time, subject to the Media Code of Conduct, deal with any issue, cause, organisation or individual. However, given the large number of contesting parties, coverage of election campaign events and other related issues will be limited by the capacity of media organisations to assign staff for these activities. The allocation of free and paid-for time and space for political parties to present their views in the media is a response to this constraint.

Editorial judgments therefore continue to rest solely with the respective organisations. These judgments aim to subscribe to the highest principles of impartiality, fairness and integrity, always separating fact from inference in matters of political and other controversy and supported by eye-witnessed and attributable official statements and other sources to corroborate facts in particular stories.

5. "Political activities of media functionaries and the likelihood of charges of bias."

Media organisations agree that individual owners, full-time staff members, part-time employees or other individuals contracted to write, produce or present articles, scripts, programmes, commentaries or other material intended for public dissemination and who (a) **are publicly identified as candidates for election to Parliament**; or, (b) **hold office in a political party**, are likely to be open to charges of bias. Accordingly, media organisations agree that such individuals will, in the performance of their functions, refrain from using their programmes for the purpose of promoting political objectives during the period beginning with the date of signature of the Media Code of Conduct and its accompanying Guidelines, and ending the day after the results of elections will have been declared.

6. "Errors of Fact."

The media undertakes to deal responsibly with any complaints received in respect to reports published or broadcast and containing errors of fact, and where, in their opinion, these are justified to publish or broadcast appropriate corrections.

7. "Coverage on the day of Polling."

Media organisations agree that no coverage of any activity by the political parties shall take place for a period to begin 24 (twenty-four) hours prior to the opening of Polling Stations on the day of Polling and continue to the close of Polling Stations.

8. "The Monitoring of Media Performance."

Media organisations agree to the establishment of an Independent Elections Media Monitoring and Refereeing Panel for the overall purpose of being a point of reference for the submission of complaints about performance in the reporting and coverage of events during the election campaign.

Media organisations expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Guyana Elections Commission and other donors to identify and secure resources to support this work.

Media organisations however agreed that the terms of reference, functions and structure as well as the articulation of sanctions and other measures aimed at improving performance should be formulated by those media organisations which have signed the Media Code of Conduct and its accompanying Guidelines and stand ready to work collaboratively with the Guyana Elections Commission to achieve the objective of a functional Independent Elections Media Monitoring and Refereeing Panel.

Code of Conduct for Political Parties

GUYANA ELECTIONS COMMISSION (GECOM)

THE ELECTORAL CODE OF CONDUCT

For Political Parties

Contesting the 2001 General and Regional Elections

In the belief that the manner in which elections are conducted is crucial to the well-being of Guyana and to its functioning as a democracy, the leadership of the political parties contesting the 2001 General and Regional Elections, will urge our candidates, agents, members and supporters to contribute positively to a peaceful political atmosphere in which our respective policies and programmes for Guyana's future development will be the dominant feature of our campaigns. In this regard, we solemnly declare that:

I. LAWS, RULES AND PROCEDURES

We will act in accordance with all existing laws, rules and procedures governing the electoral process.

We, our candidates, agents, members and supporters will eschew all illegal and corrupt practices.

We will insist that our candidates, agents and members avoid making speeches or statements that promote racial or ethnic tension by using stereotypes and other language to denigrate citizens or groups through derogatory references to race, gender, religious belief or cultural practices.

We will urge our candidates, agents, members and supporters to respect the rights of others and, in particular, the right of freedom of speech and the right to hold and express contrary views.

We will urge our candidates, agents, members and supporters to respect the presence of observers approved and accordingly identified by GECOM and, in so doing to be courteous and helpful to them.

II. A PEACEFUL CAMPAIGN AND RESPECT FOR OTHERS

We will contribute in every way to the goal of a peaceful electoral process and hereby undertake to:

- i. forbid the use of threats, harassment or incitement to violence that might cause disruption whether at political rallies or elsewhere, or any other form of intimidatory behaviour;
- ii. forbid the use of abusive, slanderous or threatening language, or language likely to incite persons of one group to violence against any person, member or members of any other group of persons.
- iii. forbid the publication of any pamphlet, poster or other material containing matters which can offend or incite people to cause public disorder;
- iv. forbid our candidates, agents, members and supporters from engaging in acts of interference with rallies, meetings, gatherings or processions of other parties.
- v. forbid all acts aimed at defacing, destroying or damaging any poster, notice or other campaign materials of other political parties.
- vi. avoid indulging in personal attacks based on defamatory comments referring to individuals, their families, other relatives, or associates, or on remarks calculated to cause personal embarrassment.

III. RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

We, together with our candidates, agents, members and supporters will cooperate with, and give support to, the Elections Commission and its officials in the proper execution of their functions and duties and we will refrain from attacks, threats or other improper treatment of these persons during the campaign

We will ensure that our candidates, agents, members and supporters refrain from interfering in any way with the conduct of the poll and the counting process and avoid all attempts to spread false rumours about electoral activities.

We will urge our candidates, agents, members and supporters not to damage in any way any premises in which polling places are located or to remove, deface or damage any electoral materials.

IV. COOPERATION WITH POLICE, MILITARY AND SECURITY AUTHORITIES

We will show respect for, and give support to, the law enforcement, military and security authorities in the proper discharge of their duties during the campaign period. We agree that unhelpful behaviour by parties and candidates towards these authorities should be avoided.

V. COMMITMENT TO IMPLEMENTATION

We agree that effective implementation of this Code by all political parties contesting the General and Regional Elections will significantly enhance the prospects for a free and fair election and we pledge ourselves to undertake, abide by and act according to its text, spirit and intent.

Accordingly, we will issue instructions to our candidates, agents, members and supporters directing them to observe this Code of Conduct and we pledge to take such other action as may be necessary to ensure that its principles are widely disseminated and followed.

VI. ACCEPTANCE OF ELECTION RESULTS

It is our understanding and expectation that the Elections Commission will manage the electoral process and declare the results in accordance with the statutory procedures and other requirements. In these circumstances, we undertake to accept the results with graciousness and magnanimity and to studiously refrain from statements or actions calculated to encourage dissatisfaction with the results, without prejudice, however, to the right conferred by law to resort to the legal processes at the instance of any person or political party.

Party Newspaper Advertisements

GUYANA NEEDS... ...Big minds with Big plans

Have you heard any vision from the PPP/C?
Guyana's Annual Growth Rate has dropped:
— from +7.7% in 1992
— to -1.5% in 2001

This is serious!
You feel the effects everyday.
We don't need more decay in our economy.
We need REAL Growth!
We don't need Vishnu Bisram's cooked up poll numbers from Freedom House.
We don't need a Government who claims life in Guyana is a picnic.
We need a Government with a REAL plan!
PNC REFORM is ready:

- to implement a REAL development plan
- to create 100,000 new jobs
- to make Guyana economically and socially successful

Vote for REAL economic growth:

| | | |
|--------------|---|----------|
| PNC/R |  | X |
|--------------|---|----------|

Our Plan for Wealth Creation
The grand vision of the PNC REFORM is to move Guyana from an agriculture-based society to an economy based more on manufacturing, industry and services. The PNC REFORM can achieve this over the next 10 years.
The PNC REFORM has found and will continue to find strategic partners to assist in transforming Guyana's economy. These partners will bring to Guyana the economic synergies, capital, skills, distribution networks, advanced technologies and, most crucial, access to overseas market. In all this, Guyanese will share equally in the wealth created.
This transformation, both economic and social, can only occur by creating a non-racial society. Such a society must also focus on high economic growth through good governance, nation building policies and competent management of our international affairs.
PNC REFORM will make Guyana into a transshipment hub. As a transshipment hub, Guyana's economy will be linked as the English-speaking doorway to the rest of South America, which will revitalise Guyana's existing communities and spawn the development of new ones.
PNC REFORM will fully involve in these processes the Guyanese-born expatriate population who also have skills, knowledge, experience, capital, technology, contacts and market access. Inclusiveness is critical to Guyana's success.
Transport infrastructure is fundamental to growth because without adequate and efficient infrastructure there can be no trade, economic development and no improvement in quality of life.
Our GUYANA 21 programme will open up our country for diversified development. The infrastructure elements of this programme will be implemented within strict environmental guidelines and impact assessments.
With our strategy, Guyana will:

- Achieve a 10-12% annual economic growth rate
- Create 20-25 thousand jobs annually
- Attract US\$300—US\$500 million investment annually
- Forge Guyanese ownership through private partnerships
- Convert Guyana's natural resources into exports
- Make Guyana a transshipment hub and create an export-driven economy, while encouraging food sufficiency.

Both main parties took out advertisements in the two national daily newspapers. This advertisement was placed by the PNC/R, overleaf a double-page spread placed by PPP/C

This is what the Future holds for you.

- Restructure traditional industries such as rice, sugar, bauxite and forestry to make them internationally competitive.
- An unprecedented surge of export growth in non-traditional industries.
- Promote a sound macro-economy for a positive business and investment environment, a stable exchange rate & lower interest rates.
- An expansion of eco-tourism, agro processing sectors and the emergence of information technology.

- Encourage and facilitate the Private Sector to lead economic expansion.
- The establishment of a Stock Market and a Private Sector Development Bank.
- New Roads, Bridges, Highways, Industrial Estates will be fast-tracked.
- Up-grade and extend communications and transportation network.
- Completion of the Guyana / Brazil Road.
- A Deep-Water Harbour, which will create a new economic sector in the transshipment of goods to and from Brazil.
- Urban Development Plan - Transforming the city, towns and creating new townships.
- Promotion of economic diversification and more, better paying jobs.

- Emphasis on social inclusion.
- Programme targeted at Poverty Reduction.
- Taking care of the Elderly - improving pensions and retirement funds, social and nursing centres.
- Promotion of the Welfare of vulnerable groups - Women and Children.
- Better education - provision of more Technical, Vocational and Tertiary Education.
- More house lots and easy financing to deliver affordable housing for all.
- Water for all.
- Improved telephone and electricity services.
- Special Development programme for Hinterland and Amerindian Development.
- A stronger better equipped Police Force and Army.
- Emphasis on Accountability, Ethics and Morality.

VOTE PPP/C 
Let progress continue

PAID ADVERTISEMENT



Elections Commission Voter Information

GUAYANA ELECTIONS 2001
VOTER'S GUIDE

How the 65 seats are allocated in the National Assembly

Geographical Constituencies

The 25 seats for Geographical Constituencies are allocated among the 10 Regions of Guyana as shown in the map below.

The New Electoral System

The new system is one of proportional representation, designed to ensure gender and geographical constituency representation.

What is proportional representation?
Under proportional representation, each party presents a list of candidates to the electorate, each voter votes for one party's list of candidates, and the parties receive approximately the same proportion of seats as their overall proportion of the national vote.

Under the new system, there will be: 65 members elected to the National Assembly

- 25 members elected from the geographical constituencies
- 40 members elected from a National Top-up Mechanism.

Gender is on the Agenda

In the new electoral system, 1/3 of all of a party's candidates on the Geographical Constituency Lists and on the National Top-up List must be women.

Secrecy of Vote

Your vote is secret. No one will know what party you have chosen in the polling booth.

BEWARE of taking the following measures to ensure that your vote is kept secret.

- You will mark your ballot behind a privacy screen.
- No one can see how you mark your ballot.
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Why should you Vote?

Government officials make decisions everyday that affect the well-being of your life, the lives of your family and community. By voting for a party of your choice, you are selecting the people who will make these very important decisions. If you don't vote, then you allow other people who do vote to choose government officials without your input. These others may not share your views about issues that matter to you.

Voting also provides you with an opportunity to remind the elected government officials that they are accountable to you, if they have not done a good job in representing you, an election gives you an opportunity to replace them.

Every citizen has the right and responsibility to vote.

Where to Vote

At the polling station on Election Day where your name is listed. All polling stations will be properly identified.

Valid Forms of Identification

- National Identification Card
- Special Identification Card
- Valid/Current Passport
- Other forms to be determined by GECOM prior to Elections

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VOTE MONDAY MARCH 19, 2001... MAKE YOUR MARK

VOTE MONDAY MARCH 19, 2001... MAKE YOUR MARK

This double-page spread by the Guyana Elections Commission, part of a four-page Voter's Guide, was included in national newspapers the week before polling day

Information from the Domestic Election Observers

Electoral Assistance Bureau

GENERAL & REGIONAL ELECTIONS 2001

OBSERVERS:

EAB will have in excess of 1000 observers at polling places throughout Guyana on Election Day, March 19, 2001.

REGIONAL COORDINATORS

EAB has coordinators in all ten regions of Guyana and they are responsible for the monitoring and observation of the electoral process.

- | | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| • Abraham, Jude | • Mahase, Gerald | • Noble, Maurice | • Singh, David |
| • Bacchus, Syed | • Mingo, Linda | • Paul, Karen | • Solomon, Dr Cyril |
| • Coates, Ivor | • Moonsammy, Elizabeth | • Peters, Tobias | • Torreza, Angela |
| • Cummings, Lunsford | • Muslim, S.M.M. | • Pierre, Bernice | |
| • Ferreira, Victor | • Namdar, Goolzar | • Saul, Gladwin | |

SUPERVISORS:

The supervisors will assist the coordinators and observers, at polling places on Election Day.

All EAB Coordinators, Observers and Supervisors have been trained in the task of electoral observation, and have each signed a pledge committing themselves to performing their duties in a professional, objective and non-partisan manner.

The EAB urges all Guyanese to exercise their democratic right to vote in our general and regional elections and also to ensure that peace and tranquility will be maintained before, during, and after the elections.

THE EAB COUNCIL MEMBERS ARE:

- Fr. Malcolm Rodrigues - Chairman • Paul Geer - Secretary
• Mona Bynoe • David King • Dr. Kenneth King.

For more information contact EAB at: 127 Carmichael & Quamina Streets, Georgetown, Guyana Tel: 223-9814 to 17 Fax: 227-3028

The domestic election observers of the Electoral Assistance Bureau also provided information on their activities by means of newspaper advertisements such as this, which appeared two days before election day