



**Organización de los Estados Americanos
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Organisation des États américains
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Date: May 2008

Technical Mission

Organization of American States

Preliminary Findings and Recommendations

April 7, 2008



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THE SECRETARY GENERAL

May 2008

Excellency:

I have the honor to submit to Your Excellency the preliminary findings and recommendations of the Technical Mission of the Organization of American States concerning the preparations for general elections, constitutionally mandated to take place before April, 2009.

The visit by technical experts of the OAS General Secretariat responds to the January 24, 2008 request of Your Excellency's Government to observe the electoral process and address concerns related to the preparation of the electoral registry by the Parliamentary Elections Office.

As is customary, the OAS Mission will make this report available to the participating political parties, electoral authorities and general populace.

I wish to take this opportunity, Mr. Prime Minister, to renew the assurances of my highest consideration.

José Miguel Insulza

His Excellency
The Right Honourable Keith C. Mitchell
Prime Minister of Grenada
St. George's, Grenada

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17th & Constitution Ave. N.W.
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From March 31 to April 1, 2008 three officials of the OAS General Secretariat visited Grenada to analyze concerns presented by the National Democratic Council about the electoral registry. This visit comprised a technical component of an electoral observation requested by the Government of Grenada for the general elections, not yet convened, but legally mandated no later than March 2009. The members of the delegation included Steven Griner from the OAS Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation, Felix Ortega and Richard Campbell of the OAS Executive Secretariat for Integral Development. OAS Representative in Grenada, Francis McBarnette also participated in the meetings and consultations.

OAS Electoral Assistance and Observation in Grenada

The OAS has observed two electoral processes in Grenada, the general elections of 1999 and 2003. The 1999 final report recommended a system of continuous voter registration “to ensure that the voter registry is up-to-date and accurate.” The Mission report further asserted that “by implementing a continuous registration system, those voters who reach voting age before elections could be more easily included in the registry [and such a system] would facilitate the publication of an updated voter’s list regardless of the date of elections.” Lastly, the report concluded that if the civil registry was integrated with this system, it could “serve as a useful source of demographic information for social and economic policy and planning.”

To assist in implementing this and other recommendations, the OAS General Secretariat initiated a long-term technical electoral assistance program with the Office of Parliamentary Elections and the Civil Registry, providing hardware, developing software and making available technical expertise that would automate both voter registration as well as the recording of births, deaths and marriages. The original objective of the program was to link the two lists to more quickly purge names of deceased persons from the electoral registry as well as print birth and death certificates from a computer in one of the seven offices of the civil registry. While data has been entered on the civil and electoral registries on a continuous basis, the linkage between the two, and hence the full potential of the computerization has not been realized, due in part to legal impediments since legislation is still needed to make computer-generated certificates legal documents. Nevertheless, the electronic storage of information has greatly enhanced the effectiveness

and the accuracy of both the civil and electoral registries since verifications can be done automatically, obviating the use of cumbersome paper files and logs.

Electoral Registry

Since the implementation of continuous registration in 2004 (interrupted by Hurricane Ivan in 2004 and reinitiated in 2005), the electoral registry contains 64,551 entries, which represent all registrants through December 31, 2007. The Parliamentary Elections Office provides updated lists on a quarterly basis and informed the OAS Technical Mission that another would be available by the end of April or the beginning of May. This new registry will contain all registered voters through March 31, 2008. A two-week claims and objections period follows in which citizens are to check their information at one of the fifteen constituency offices in the country.

The opposition National Democratic Congress submitted to the OAS Technical Mission lists from twelve constituencies of names, which allegedly contain errors such as omissions, duplications, deceased persons and displacements.¹ The number of names with possible irregularities received by the Mission totals 884, or 1.39 percent of the electoral registry. (The Technical Mission was informed that the NDC has submitted list from all fifteen constituencies to the Parliamentary Elections Office.) The OAS Technical Mission does not have any evidence that these complaints have been registered through the claims-and-objections process.

Recommendations of the OAS Technical Mission:

The Technical Mission constitutes an important component of a broader scoped OAS Electoral Observation Mission, which will deploy observers in the fifteen constituencies before and on Election Day. These observers will collect additional information on the electoral process, which will be included in a final report presented to the OAS Permanent Council upon conclusion of the elections.

The Technical Mission wishes to emphasize its role of an international observer during this electoral process. Under no circumstance does it seek to supplant the legally constituted electoral authorities and urges citizens and political parties alike to follow legal procedures to address its concerns regarding the preparations for national elections.

Nevertheless, as is customary for missions of this nature, the OAS Technical Mission wishes to offer the following recommendations to promote greater transparency and public confidence in the electoral process.

¹ The constituencies include Carriacou and Petite Martinique, St. John, St. George South, North East St. George, South East St. George, St. David, St. Mark, St. Patrick East, St. Patrick West, St. Andrew North East, St. Andrew South East and St. Andrew South West.

1. The Parliamentary Elections Office has qualified personnel who can manage the automated electoral registry and the OAS Technical Mission stands witness to the professionalism and integrity with which all the staff in this office carries out its duties. As elections approach, though, it is important that the Supervisor of Elections and her technical staff devote themselves full time to entering information and ensuring the accuracy of the voter registry. The Technical Mission believes that the number of data entry and verification personnel be doubled until the issuance of the final voter registry.
2. The Government of Grenada should ensure that the Parliamentary Elections Office has all of the resources needed to complete this and other tasks related to the preparation and organization of elections.
3. The OAS Technical Mission urges the electoral authorities and political party representatives to maintain open and fluid communications regarding the organization of the elections. Each political party should appoint a technical representative who should meet with the Supervisor of Elections or her technical staff at predetermined, regular meetings to ensure that concerns are addressed on an immediate and continuous basis.
4. The OAS Technical Mission is pleased that the version of the electoral registry, which will include all new entrants during the first quarter of 2008, will be made available by late April or early May. It is important that the list be organized by constituency and be made available to the political parties for the pre-established nominal fee.
5. Likewise, it is important that the addendum of newly registered electors from April 1, 2008 to the issuance of the Writ of Elections be available for public scrutiny at least three weeks before Election Day.
6. Upon making the consolidated list including the first quarter of 2008 available to the political parties and the public, it is incumbent upon all those involved -- the Parliamentary Elections Office, political parties and citizens -- to verify the accuracy of the list. Any perceived discrepancies, including omissions, duplications, displacements or deceased names should be made through the claims-and-objections process in the appropriate constituency office, following proper and legal procedures.
7. The OAS Technical Missions urges all citizens of Grenada to register to vote and to confirm their information on the electoral registries. Likewise, candidates from the fifteen constituencies of the countries should inform their supporters about the process for registration and verification of the information through the claims and objections period.

Post Electoral Process

Immediate priority should be given to tasks directly related to the preparation of the expected general elections of the country. However, the Technical Mission wishes to make four specific recommendations to ensure quality control of the information in the civil and electoral registries and the realization of the full potential of the automated processes implemented.

1. With the participation of both parties, parliament should review the legal impediments of fulfilling realizing the potential of automated civil and electoral registries and introduce legislation to give legal validity to computer generated birth and death certificates. At the request of the Government of Grenada, the OAS provided some legal guidelines in 2006 and this document could serve as an important point of departure.
2. The Government of Grenada should make available to public servants working in the Civil Registry and the Parliamentary Elections Offices continuing education courses to improve their knowledge of information systems. It is important that both institutions develop a pool of personnel with the technical expertise to manage and address problems with the automated database. In addition, the Grenadian authorities should pursue efforts to modernize the operations of both the Civil and Electoral registry.
3. Both institutions should continue to review and improve the procedures for data entry and verification.
4. Given the complexity of the technology being implemented, the Supervisor of Elections should be considered a full time position, at least during the final year leading up to Elections.

The Technical Mission will continue to monitor the preparations for elections and offers its good offices to address any additional issues that the pertinent national authorities deem appropriate. The members of the Technical Mission wish to thank the political, electoral and governmental authorities who provided their valuable insights on the electoral process of Grenada.