



Electoral Observation Mission in Saint Lucia - November 28, 2011

OAS ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION (OAS/EOM) PRELIMINARY STATEMENT - November 29, 2011

Led by Dr. Rosina Wiltshire from Barbados, the OAS deployed an Electoral Observation Mission composed of 14 international observers who observed the voting process in all 17 constituencies of Saint Lucia as well as the campaign period immediately preceding the general elections.

The voting was conducted in a fluid and peaceful manner demonstrating the St. Lucians' commitment and respect for democracy. "I wish to congratulate the St. Lucian people for exercising their franchise peacefully and look forward to working with the newly elected government," stated OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza.

To carry out their work, OAS international observers visited 100 out of the 102 polling sites on Election Day. Voting started on time at 6:30am in the polling sites observed. Presiding officers, poll clerks and assistant poll clerks punctually showed up to manage the voting process and had the necessary electoral materials to do their task. The Mission observed a heavy turnout early in the morning with long lines of citizens peacefully waiting to exercise their right to vote, although some electors had difficulties identifying their assigned polling site. The Mission also noted the extensive police presence in the voting centers as well as the significant presence of women as electoral officials and party agents in the polling sites observed. Although assistance was provided to elderly voters, members of the Mission observed difficulties for handicapped voters to access some voting centers. In the pre-electoral period, the OAS/EOM conducted extensive interviews with government representatives, the St. Lucia Electoral Commission, political parties, and key stakeholders from civil society organizations. The OAS Mission would like to point out three issues focused on gender, financing and boundaries.

First, women composed the majority of poll workers in St. Lucia, with an average of 87 percent participation in the polling sites observed by the OAS. The majority of party agents were also women. However, the number of female candidates remained limited. The Mission would like to recognize the progress in the percentage of female candidacies. Whereas 8.3% of the candidates in the 2006 election were women, the numbers increased in 2011 to 10 out of 52 candidates, or 19%. There still, however, needs to be improvement so that their active participation as candidates is equivalent to their proportion of the electorate.

Second, the Mission is deeply concerned that in 2006, the OAS/EOM had made a recommendation calling on parliament to establish rules which would not leave the campaign financing issue in such a gray zone. This is fundamental to the transparency of the electoral system and the democratic process. We therefore call on parliament to put in place legislation, including strengthening the Integrity Commission and auditing and reporting mechanisms. The Mission would like to emphasize the following three aspects:

- Source of financing: in the absence of legislation, and tracking mechanisms, the sources of campaign funds could not be determined. Anonymous contributions and those of foreigners are allowed, which goes against general norms and practices around the world.
- Accountability: the Mission observed an absence of control mechanisms regarding funding coming in and out of the campaign as there are not institutions with a mandate to supervise campaign spending.
- Transparency: the Mission noted Saint Lucians have no access to information regarding campaign financing by the parties.
Third, in relation to boundaries, whereas the two largest constituencies have 18,122 and 12,677 electors, respectively, the two smallest have 6,153 and 5,984, respectively. The Mission noted the need for a redefinition of constituency boundaries complying with the legislation that establishes a balanced distribution of inhabitants per constituency.

With the purpose of improving the electoral system in St. Lucia, and based on the observations and information gathered both in the pre-electoral period and on Election Day, the OAS Electoral Observation Mission would like to offer the following recommendations:

1. To facilitate the voting process for handicapped voters with appropriate voting facilities as well as to display the electoral roll on the outside of each polling site so that voters can easily identify their assigned voting table.
2. To promote a serious discussion on the role of women in politics, specifically whether there is a need for a quota system to give incentives to female party activists and how political parties can enable their political leadership.
3. To encourage a public debate on the need for legislation on campaign financing, specifically rules to prohibit anonymous and foreign contributions, the establishment of a mechanism or institution to control money coming in and out of the campaign and wider access information by the citizens on the use of funds and the requirement for parties to disclose this information.
4. To establish, immediately after the election, the Commission on Electoral Boundaries to define, based on the April 2011 census results, a more equitable division of constituencies.

Dr. Rosina Witlshire will address the OAS Permanent Council in January with a detailed Verbal Report that will be made available at the [OAS Website](#).