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**REPORT OF THE OAS ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION IN SURINAME  
PARLIAMENTARY AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS 2005**

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June **20** , 2006

Excellency:

I have the honor to address Your Excellency to request your kind assistance in having distributed to the members of the Permanent Council the attached report of the OAS Electoral Observation Mission in Suriname. The report reflects the activities undertaken by the Mission during the observation of the general elections in Suriname, held on May 25, 2005.

Accept, Excellency, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Ramdin', written over a horizontal line.

Albert Ramdin  
Assistant Secretary General  
In charge of the General Secretariat

His Excellency  
Ellsworth I.A. John  
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines  
Chair of the Permanent Council  
of the Organization of American States  
Washington, D.C.

**ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES**

**REPORT OF THE  
OAS ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION IN SURINAME  
PARLIAMENTARY AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS 2005**

**Secretariat for Political Affairs**

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Thanks also are extended to the Governments of Brazil and the United States of America for financial and other assistance and support.

## ACRONYMS AND INITIALS

The following acronyms defined first in English and then in Dutch appear throughout the text. If the acronym is of an English phrase no such rendering follows in Dutch.

<b>CARICOM:</b>	Caribbean Community
<b>CBB:</b>	Civil Registry ( <i>Centraal Bureau voor Burgerzaken</i> )
<b>CEBUMA:</b>	Central Bureau of Mechanical Administration ( <i>Centraal Bureau Mechanische Administratie</i> )
<b>CPA or CHS:</b>	Central Polling Authority/Central Main Polling Station ( <i>Centraal Hoofd Stembureau</i> )
<b>DPDA:</b>	Department of Political and Democratic Affairs of the Organization of American States
<b>EOM:</b>	Electoral Observation Mission of the OAS ( <i>Verkiezings Waarnemings Missie</i> )
<b>IDB:</b>	Interamerican Development Bank
<b>NA:</b>	National Assembly ( <i>Nationale Assemblée</i> or <i>De Nationale Assemblée</i> )
<b>NDP:</b>	National Democratic Party ( <i>Nationale Democratische Partij</i> )
<b>NF:</b>	New Front ( <i>Nieuw Front</i> ) coalition of political parties.
<b>OAS:</b>	Organization of American States ( <i>Organisatie van Amerikaanse Staten</i> )
<b>OKB:</b>	Independent Electoral Council ( <i>Onafhankelijk Kies Bureau</i> )
<b>UNDP:</b>	United Nations Development Program
<b>VVV:</b>	United People's Assembly ( <i>Verenigde Volks Vergadering</i> )
<b>VVV:</b>	People's Alliance for Progress (Volksalliantie Voor Vooruitgang) combination of political parties <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> During the 2005 election cycle, the initials VVV were used in two different ways in Suriname. The VVV is the body that eventually elected the President and Vice President. However, during and after the electoral campaign, the same acronym was also used for an alliance of political organizations that contested the elections. The reader should be able to distinguish these different entities from the text of the report.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report tells the story of the 2005 electoral cycle in the Republic of Suriname through the eyes of international observers invited by the Government of Suriname and sent by the Organization of American States (OAS). They were present for the general elections on May 25, 2005, as well as for the election of the president and vice president in July and August.

The May observer team consisted of 14 international observers from nine member and observer states. During the final phase of the observation process, the Chief and Deputy Chief of Mission returned to Suriname for three meetings of the National Assembly, as it attempted to elect the president and vice president, on July 19, 21, and 26, 2005. When the necessary majority was not attained in that body, the Deputy Chief of Mission returned for the meeting of the United People's Assembly (VUV) on August 3, 2005, at which the president and vice president were elected by simple majority.

Unfortunately, the OAS was compelled to shorten its planned observation of the May general elections because of consequences stemming from unexpected delays in the signing of the two legal agreements, which are required for the Organization to begin its observation efforts in any country. Therefore, no substantive observation activities began until just two weeks before the elections.

This delay restricted the number of observers and the number of administrative/electoral districts in which they could observe. Observers were sent to eight of the ten districts, where they attended mass political meetings, contacted local officials, met with representatives of political organizations, and listened to the people.

The observation team notes that, as in previous elections observed by the OAS in Suriname, there were allegations that the list of eligible voters was larger than many would have expected, based on the estimated population of over-18 year olds. This report reviews the recommendations made by the OAS Mission after the 2000 elections and makes additional suggestions based on what observers saw or could investigate in 2005.

Among the OAS member states that are also members of CARICOM, the Organization has unique credibility in Suriname, based substantially on the Special Mission to Suriname, which was deployed for a lengthy period of time at the request of the Government following the Interior War. That Mission was respected by the people and successive Governments of Suriname for assisting in the building of democratic institutions and in the consolidation of democratic practices following the conflict and in the context of the period of the return to civilian rule.

The 2005 OAS electoral observation mission, despite its short deployment and relatively limited geographic scope, the ability and experience of its Chief of Mission, Ambassador Corinne Mc Knight, who created several opportunities to listen to the heartfelt concerns of opposition political groupings and parties when they came to the OAS expressing some frustration with electoral institutions and/or practices.

Listening to people may seem to some to be a small contribution. In fact, listening and hearing, and the action that follows, are absolutely essential in reducing tensions and animating the most positive response to contradictory interpretations of



fact and to the assertion of political

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rumors, which are rife in political settings everywhere. In addition to the Chief of Mission, the experienced observers that the OAS was able to deploy around the country performed this same service.

The politics of Suriname are not easy to understand or to describe in brief. The OAS observer team noted that essentially three political forces were in play during the May 25<sup>th</sup> elections and the selection of the country's executive leadership: a long-time alliance of political parties known as the Nieuw Front (NF), the country's largest free-standing political party, the National Democratic Party (NDP) and a series of other parties and alliances which sought seats as individual parties or combinations of parties. Willing parties and coalitions of this third type then sometimes chose to associate themselves with the government or opposition sides in the National Assembly and, at times, during the presidential and vice-presidential elections.

The story told in the rest of this report will attempt to provide useful and even-handed descriptions of the political movements, leaders, and events that were observed by the OAS during several months in 2005. In addition, suggestions are made based on the observations to assist further in the consolidation of Suriname's democracy and strengthen the transparency and efficiency of its electoral institutions to increase public confidence and trust.



## **CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION**

Suriname, with 440,000 inhabitants (July 2005 estimate), is located on the northeastern coast of South America, bordering French Guiana on the east, the Co-operative Republic of Guyana on the west, and Brazil on the south.

Its people reflect many ethnic groups and speak many languages. The indigenous peoples are Amerindians, the only inhabitants until 1652 when the British established a colony. The Netherlands conquered Suriname 15 years later, and it remained a Dutch colony until it achieved independence on November 25, 1975.

Slaves were taken to Suriname by several colonial powers. Descendants of slaves, persons contracted to work in the country after slavery was abolished, and others comprise the threads of Suriname's ethnic tapestry: the Creoles, who live primarily in Paramaribo and the coastal area, and the Maroons, descendants of escaped slaves who built independent communities in the interior. After slavery was abolished in 1863, indentured laborers were brought from India and Indonesia. The East Indian and Javanese populations live mostly in the coastal area and in Paramaribo. There are a number of Chinese immigrants, as well as other residents with a variety of heritages.

On February 25, 1980, a group of 16 soldiers led by Sergeant Desi Bouterse took over the country. Resistance against military rule grew over time in northeastern Suriname, especially near the bauxite-mining town of Moengo. Bouterse's ex-bodyguard, Ronnie Brunswijk, led the Jungle Commando resistance in the internal conflict, which eventually spread to central and western Suriname. At the end of 1986 and the first half of 1987, the army attacked a number of Maroon villages in the interior.

In March 1987, a draft Constitution was written. It was approved by referendum the following September, and general elections took place on November 25, 1987. The three largest political parties formed the Front for Development and Democracy and won a landslide victory. However, political conditions worsened and on December 24, 1990, the acting army commander proclaimed that the military had again taken over the government.

An interim government was installed, and new elections were held on May 25, 1991. These were observed by the OAS. The Nieuw Front (NF), a coalition of four parties, won 30 seats in the National Assembly but lacked the two-thirds majority to elect a president there. The United People's Assembly (VUV) met on September 6, 1991, and elected Runaldo Ronald Venetiaan president. During its five-year term, the government concluded a peace agreement with the armed opposition and requested the OAS to assist in the monitoring and implementation of the accords through the Special Mission to Suriname.

In the general elections of May 23, 1996, the Nieuw Front (NF) again won a majority of National Assembly seats but failed to obtain a two-thirds majority. At the United People's Assembly (VUV), however, opposition candidate Jules Wijdenbosch was elected president. The OAS observed all of those electoral processes.

Internal political pressures and economic conditions resulted in an agreement by the Wijdenbosch government to hold elections on May 25, 2000, before its five-year mandate was over. The NF won a convincing majority with 33 seats in the National Assembly, and former president Venetiaan was elected president by that body in August 2000. Once again, the OAS observed each of those electoral processes. Suriname's May 25, 2005, elections were called at the end of that last five-year term of office.

As is the practice with all OAS electoral observations, the process begins when a sovereign member state invites the OAS to send international observers. In this case, the Government of Suriname, through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, wrote a letter of invitation to the OAS Secretary General on May 6, 2004 (see Appendix III). The invitation arrived during a period of change and uncertainty at the Organization.

The response, sent by the Acting Secretary General, Ambassador Luigi R. Einaudi, on March 15, 2004 (see Appendix III), replied that the Organization would be prepared to send a team of international observers to monitor the electoral processes in Suriname but that their deployment would depend on raising sufficient Specific (external) Funds. Two member states provided financial contributions: the Government of Brazil authorized funding for the exploratory mission from the Permanent Specific Fund to Finance Activities Related to OAS Electoral Observation Missions [AG/RES. 1637 (XXIX-O/99)], and the Government of the United States of America pledged funds for the subsequent aspects of the Mission. The Electoral Observation Mission to Suriname 2005 gratefully acknowledges the generosity of these member states and thanks them for their prompt responses to the request for funding.

The Acting Secretary General appointed Ambassador Corinne McKnight, of Trinidad and Tobago, as Chief of Mission. She had retired from her country's foreign service after a distinguished career and had previously served as the Chief of the OAS Electoral Observation Mission during the general elections in November 2003 in Grenada.

This and all reports of electoral observation should attempt to tell a coherent story on the political climate and developments surrounding the elections, describe the preparations that were made for them and their conduct, and report on any other matters that were of significance during the period. This report begins by discussing the all-important political context of Suriname during 2005, continues with a description of the complicated and decentralized electoral processes of the country, describes the activities of the observers during three phases of activity, and makes conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER II. POLITICAL CONTEXT**

### **A. THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM**

Suriname has a complex and decentralized system for organizing and administering elections. The country is divided into ten electoral districts, which correspond to its administrative districts. The district commissioner, appointed by the president, is the highest government official in each district and also is responsible for election administration in the district.

The National Assembly (DNA), consisting of 51 members, is the highest political body in Suriname. Each district elects a specified number of members of the DNA, which is established

in the constitution and not allocated based on the population of the district. Assembly members are elected on the basis of the proportional representation, as well as preferential voting. The seats are allocated as follows:

Paramaribo	17	
Wanica		7
Nickerie	5	
Coronie		2
Saramacca	3	
Commewijne	4	
Marowijne	3	
Para	3	
Brokopondo	3	
Sipaliwini	4	

The National Assembly and the government, headed by the president, together hold legislative power.

Unlike most other members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Suriname does not have a separate system for voter registration. Instead, the government extracts the names of eligible voters from the general population registry, which is maintained by the civil registry, in Dutch, the *Centraal Bureau voor Burgerzaken* (CBB).

Each of Suriname's electoral districts is divided into local constituencies (*ressorts*). Local council members (*ressortraad*) are elected in the general elections, with winners being determined by the number of personal votes that they receive (on a "first past the post" or plurality basis). Members of district councils are selected indirectly on the basis of the results for local councils. Seats in both councils are allocated according to the population of the constituency.

The Central Polling Authority (CPA or CHS, based on the Dutch acronym for *Centraal Hoofd Stembureau* and often called the Central Main Polling Station) collects and publishes the results of the general elections and allocates seats won by each political party in the three elected bodies. It forwards the official statement of poll (*proces-verbaal*) to the Independent Electoral Council (OKB) and the president of Suriname. The OKB, an elections auditing body, examines the results, investigates any matters of dispute if necessary, and proclaims the final results.

The National Assembly may elect the president and vice president if a two-thirds majority is attained. Candidates for each office must be nominated by at least seven Assembly members. If no candidate for either office obtains the required majority in two sessions, the United People's Assembly (VUV) meets. It consists of all members of the National Assembly, plus all members of the district and local councils. Decisions there are made by simple majority.

## **B. THE ELECTORAL PROCESS**

*Voter List:* The Minister of Home Affairs is responsible for preparing the list of eligible voters. The CBB, a subsidiary division of the Ministry, extracts the names of persons who would be 18 by election day.

*Voter Identification Card:* Suriname does not issue separate voter

identification cards. A person's national registration card, issued by the CBB, is one of the documents that potential electors must present to vote. In 2005, a decision was taken to allow the presentation of a driver's license in the absence of a national identification card. Persons must also present a polling card to be able to vote.

*Polling Card:* The CBB sends the polling or voter card to the district commissioners, and by the commissioners to the persons eligible to vote. It informs potential voters of the polling station where their name should appear on the voter list.

*Claims and Objections Period:* The law provides a period of time for voters to check whether their names are on the preliminary list of voters and seek to amend incorrect information.

## **C. POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Individual parties and coalitions of parties, referred to as combinations, competed during the 2005 general elections. Combinations at times represent alliances of parties with support from varying groups, such as the Nieuw Front (NF) and the political combination called the Volksalliantie Voor Vooruitgang, the People's Alliance for Progress (VVP), which was led by the former president, Jules Wijdenbosch. It was believed that he named his combination so that it would have the same three initials as the body that had elected him president in 1996. This report has attempted clearly to differentiate Wijdenbosch's political combination from the body that ultimately chose the president and vice president in 2005. At other times, combinations may comprise factions from one group, such as the A-Combination, a coalition of parties drawing support substantially from the Maroons. Freestanding political parties (not part of a combination), such as the National Democratic Party (NDP), assert that they have a national political program and that they appeal to voters regardless of regional, ethnic, linguistic, religious, or other considerations.

The large numbers of parties and combinations required a sizable ballot for the National Assembly, and the ballot for local council members (*ressortraad*) also contains a long list of names.

## **D. VOTING PROCEDURES**

### **1. Opening and voting**

Polling stations have a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, three members, and five alternates. They are to open at 7 a.m. Sufficient ballots, prescribed documents, and supplies, as well as the lists of eligible voters, should have been delivered to each district commissioner and distributed by them to each polling station before the opening.

Voters enter the polling station one by one. They must show their polling/voter card and national ID card or driver's license to the chairperson. The name and number of the voter should be read aloud, and a member of the polling station checks the name against the voter list. The little finger of the voter's left hand is dipped into indelible ink. Each voter receives two paper ballots: blue for the National Assembly and white for the local council. The voter enters a voting booth and fills in circles on the blue or white ballots with a red pencil that is provided. The



voter then folds the ballots before leaving the voting booth and puts them into the ballot box after an official has checked whether the ballots have the proper stamp and signature on the back. Both types of ballots are usually placed into the same ballot box.

## **2. Party agents (Poll Watchers/Scrutineers)**

Party agents from various political organizations may be present during the voting process. Many wear T-shirts, carry party flags and other paraphernalia, and usually have sample ballots to give to persons asking for them. Suriname permits political proselytizing near the polling stations, so party agents may approach persons outside the polling station. The party representatives may also assist incapacitated voters to mark their ballots, if permitted by the chair of the polling station.

## **3. Proxy Voting**

There is no absentee voting in Suriname. However, two categories of people are allowed to designate persons to vote for them by proxy: (1) members of polling stations assigned for duty at stations outside their district and (2) police agents on official duty outside of their electoral district. The person who has a power of attorney to vote shows this declaration at the polling station and casts the proxy vote. The proxy voter also casts his or her own vote.

## **4. Assistance to Voters**

The law permits the chair of the polling station to allow a voter to be assisted if he or she is incapacitated and unable to vote independently.

## **5. Closing and counting**

Voters who are in line at 7 p.m. may still vote. Immediately after the last person has voted, the members of the polling stations complete the closing procedures and draft and sign official reports regarding the use of allocated supplies and the number of voters who have sought to vote.

The members of the polling station may then take a break of up to one hour before beginning to count the ballots. After the break, the chairperson opens the ballot box and the two different ballots, white and blue, are separated. Counting starts with the National Assembly ballots. The name of the candidate voted for and the party are read out loud, and each ballot is shown to the poll watchers and observers. Members of the polling stations tally the votes. In case of a discrepancy, a recount may be ordered. Votes for the local councils are counted in the same way.

After the counting is completed, an official statement of poll (*proces-verbaal*) is written and signed by the members of the polling station. Complaints during the counting procedure must be mentioned in that document. The ballots are wrapped and sealed, as are the forms for those who voted by proxy. The chairperson, accompanied by a police agent, takes the sealed packages and the empty ballot box to the district's main polling station (the district commissioner's office).

Each main polling station has a public meeting once all statements of poll

have been received. The district main polling station determines the votes for each political party for the National Assembly and the local council and the total number of votes cast per district. The official statement of poll from the district main polling station, as well those from each individual polling station, are then forwarded to the Central Polling Authority (CHS) in Paramaribo.

### **CHAPTER III. THE MISSION: ACTIVITIES AND OBSERVATIONS**

#### **A. PREELECTION STAGE**

It is essential for each Electoral Observation Mission to gather as much information on the electoral processes and the electoral climate of a country as soon as possible after an invitation has been received to observe. The Chief of Mission, Ambassador McKnight, and Deputy Chief, Bruce Rickerson, of the OAS Department of Democratic and Political Affairs (DDPA), traveled to Suriname from March 27 to April 2, 2005. The Government of Brazil provided funding for this exploratory mission.

A decision was taken to limit meetings to government officials, diplomats, and independent persons. No meetings were held with candidates, political parties, or factions because the Chief of Mission anticipated the question, "when will the OAS arrive?" That answer would not be available until sufficient external funds had been raised and the two legal agreements had both been signed.

The OAS team's first meeting was with the Minister of Defense, Ronald Assen, in his capacity as Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs. The OAS delegation presented drafts of the two legal agreements for consideration by the government, stressing that their signing was essential for the OAS to deploy the mission.

The delegation also met with the Minister of Home Affairs who also serves as the minister responsible for elections, Urmila Joella-Sewnundun. The OAS team was introduced to many of the personnel at the Ministry responsible for the preparation of the elections. The Minister stated that the government had taken the OAS reports on previous elections seriously and had implemented all previous recommendations and suggestions.

The OAS team met then with Ganeshkumar Kandhai, director of the CBB, and his staff. The CBB presented their assessment of the electoral list, identification cards, and the distribution of the voter/polling cards. By the end of March, the voter list and the distribution of polling cards had already become topics of political discussion.

The OAS team also met with the recently-appointed chairperson of the Independent Electoral Council (OKB), Jennifer Van Dijk-Silos. She provided informational material and explained the ongoing work of a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) preelectoral assistance project. Regarding the voter list, ID cards, and distribution of polling cards, this discussion confirmed the concerns about these matters, which the Chief of Mission had raised with the Minister of Home Affairs and the CBB.

At the CPA, the chairperson, Lothar Boksteen, and his staff provided a

thorough and professional briefing on the preparatory procedures within their ambit.

The OAS delegation also met with Max Ooft, the local UNDP representative, and David Avery, the leader of the UNDP's preelectoral assistance expert team; Angela Bailey, acting IDB representative; ambassadors of all OAS member states resident in Paramaribo, as well as the Ambassador of the Netherlands; and Surinamese experts, academics, and analysts.

By the end of the exploratory mission, the mission managers were convinced that to achieve the best possible result the OAS team would have to be in place at least by early May.

### **1. Legal Agreements**

Timely funding by the governments of Brazil and the United States should have made it possible to begin committing funds for specific elements of the Electoral Observation Mission by mid-April, including organizing the logistics in Suriname, contracting with local firms and persons, contracting with international observers, purchasing airline tickets, and carrying out the myriad administrative and financial details that inevitably must be addressed by all such missions. However, none of these arrangements could begin because the signing of the two legal agreements was delayed.

In previous election cycles, both agreements had been signed in Paramaribo. However, in 2005, the agreement granting privileges and immunities to the observers, "Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of Suriname and the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States on the Privileges and Immunities of the Election process in Suriname," was signed in Washington, D.C., by the Officer in Charge of the OAS General Secretariat and the Permanent Representative of Suriname to the OAS, His Excellency Henry Lothar Illes, on April 29, 2005 (see Appendix V). The OAS was then requested to send the other agreement to Paramaribo for the OKB to sign. To expedite the process, the Deputy Chief of Mission traveled to Paramaribo on May 8. The OKB chair signed the second agreement, "Agreement Between the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States and the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission of Suriname on the Electoral Observation Process" on May 11, 2005 (also in Appendix V).

Two weeks before the general elections, **none** of the basic requirements for the OAS Electoral Observation Mission had begun. The staff of the DDPA in Washington immediately began processing the needed financial actions on an emergency basis. Meanwhile, in Suriname, the basic arrangements relating to setting up a mission headquarters, planning for the housing, transportation, and communication for observers and numerous other matters, were just beginning.

The shortness of time to prepare resulted in a very rushed and less comprehensive, electoral observation than had been originally planned.

Special thanks are extended to several DDPA staff members, including Ana María Pereyra, Lynn Swenson, Jacqueline Deslauriers, and Caroline Murfitt-Eller. Others also contributed greatly to this emergency effort. During the entire preelectoral period, the OAS administrative technician in Suriname, Lilian Bundel-Griffith, and the OAS driver, Michael Koole, contributed their positive spirit and energetic efforts to assist the Mission to reach its goals, despite severe time

limitations. Both also provided essential support when the observers were in Suriname, especially as it had not been possible to hire a full complement of local support staff in the time available.

The Mission benefited greatly from the services of Christopher Healy, who joined the team on May 15. His vast knowledge of Suriname and extensive experience in organizing and logistics for OAS missions of several kinds, as well as other international electoral observation missions, were invaluable. Working closely with the Chief and Deputy Chief of Mission, he knitted together the indispensable elements of the Mission's organization at the same time that the observers were arriving.

## **2. Further Preelectoral Discussions**

Once the Mission began to take shape, the Chief and Deputy Chief of Mission met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Maria E. Levens, and, on a number of occasions, with the Minister of Home Affairs, the director of the CBB, and the director of the CHS. Each briefed the OAS on his or her preparations for the elections.

The Mission also observed the complicated process to prepare and package the ballots manually for distribution to each district. Although most of the training for polling station personnel had already been completed before the Mission began its work, some observer coordinators witnessed some of the training in the field.

OAS observers overheard public discussion and read media reports about the very high cost of electoral administration per voter in Suriname.

During this period, the Chief of Mission issued her initial press release (see Appendix VI) and was interviewed by a cross section of media---print, radio, and television---who were local as well as from the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. She also attended a briefing for the diplomatic corps, hosted by the Minister of Home Affairs, which was convened to explain the alleged disparity in the size of the voter list.

## **3. Listening to the Opposition**

The Chief of Mission received a delegation of opposition parties and listened to their concerns, which were also presented in writing, as had been requested (see Appendix IV). Their issues, which related mainly to size of the voter list, ID cards, and the distribution of polling cards, were also taken up with the CBB. The open door of the Mission and the willingness of the Chief of Mission to listen respectfully seemed to diminish some of the concerns.

Of the opposition parties, only the NDP maintained contact with the Mission. They subsequently returned two days prior to election day with a printout that was said to contain some 8,000 names, which were alleged to have been excluded from the final voter list. The Mission responded to a request from the Minister of Home Affairs and transmitted the names immediately. Within 24 hours, the Minister forwarded a copy of the reply from the CBB explaining the status of the names.

## **4. Observers**

A small mission, especially such a short one, needs the services of a felicitous blend of experienced persons, including some who had observed previous elections in Suriname. Some observers were senior current and former election officials and others were on their first electoral observation mission for the OAS. One result of the delay in the Mission was that several of the more experienced observers had to drop out because the OAS could not say when the Mission would begin. Consequently, a considerable percentage of first-time observers participated.

Some observers were recruited because of their ability to speak Dutch. The Chief of Mission realized early that it would be almost impossible to have a credible observation without a significant number of participants who spoke Dutch fluently. Energetic efforts were made to recruit Dutch speakers, and six of them were obtained. These persons proved to be a bonanza. The Chief of Mission and the

observers were told repeatedly that the presence of Dutch speakers infinitely added to the Mission's effectiveness.

The first batch of five observer coordinators (persons who had experience in international observation for the OAS, including in Suriname) arrived before dawn on May 16. Following a quick orientation, they proceeded to their assigned districts: Coronie, Nickerie, Para, Saramacca, and Wanica. A second group of observers arrived on May 19. Both groups received training on May 20, with particular emphasis on the electoral system, the laws, and implementing regulations under which the elections would be conducted. Surinamese academics and technical experts led the sessions. An information kit prepared by the Chief of Mission, containing copies of relevant material, was also given to each observer. This group of observers then went into the field, only five days before the voting.

Because of flight delays and other complications, a final three observers arrived on May 21. An abbreviated training program was held for them that same evening.

The Mission was additionally benefited when Annetta Just, a former member of the Danish parliament (*Folketing*) and an experienced electoral observer who was on holiday in Suriname, offered her services.

Once they were in place, Mission observers met with: the district commissioner and election officials; candidates and party coordinators; the police commander; OKB auditors; NGOs, community leaders, and the general population; and observed media coverage, political campaign materials, and civic education (all of which were in Dutch or other Surinamese languages); political campaigning and rallies; storage, processing, and distribution of electoral materials; and training of polling-station personnel.

They also made themselves available to listen to any complaints and to follow up with the district commissioners or other relevant election authorities, or refer the complaint to Mission headquarters in Paramaribo.

Observers began by familiarizing themselves with the locations of the polling stations in their districts. This helped them to select the station at which they would open and close on election day and to design their election-day itinerary so that the observation route would allow them to monitor the maximum number of polling stations.

## **B. ELECTION DAY**

On election day, observers were at the polling station where their observation would begin well before it opened at 7 a.m. This allowed them to witness the set-up and opening. During the day they visited other polling stations, returning to the polling station that they had opened when it closed 12 hours later. OAS observers were able to visit a total of 430 polling stations (77 percent of all polling stations and 86 percent in the districts that observers were able to cover).

OAS observers monitored the openings of 14 stations. Most reported that the

chairpersons and other officials adhered to correct procedures and that, in all stations that were observed, voting began within five minutes of the opening time. Attentive poll watchers and potential voters, often enthusiastic, were also ready at the opening.

Observers reported that polling station chairpersons seemed only to have the voter list that applied to their location. They did not have useful information for voters who lacked a polling card or to assist them to find their correct voting locations. It is possible that some potential voters became discouraged and may not have voted.

The atmosphere during the day was described by one OAS observer who reported that "the political groups maintained a competitive relationship, but one which allowed for coexistence in a peaceful atmosphere with only isolated outbreaks of personal confrontation."

Torrential rains made access to many stations extremely difficult, especially for the aged, physically challenged, and infirm. This did not seem to deter voters. Party agents, police, and the able bodied were eager to assist.

### **1. Party Agents (Poll Watchers/Scrutineers)**

Party agents were usually close to the polling stations during the balloting. In Suriname, this is called "voter education," although many of the activities would be illegal in other CARICOM member states. Thanks to the attitudes of Surinamers, this "works," although many Mission observers were skeptical that such a festive and calm mood would be possible in other countries. Many wore T-shirts, carried party flags and other paraphernalia, and had sample ballots to make available. Some chairpersons of polling stations allowed one representative of each party inside to mark their own copy of the voter list as voters presented themselves. When several polling stations were in schools, party agents kept track of the proceedings through window screens.

### **2. Conduct of the Polling**

Polling generally proceeded smoothly and without major incident throughout the day. Observers reported that the majority of the chairpersons and clerks appeared to be experienced and adequately trained. However, they reported some areas of uneven performance and discrepancies in the interpretation of the regulations. They also noted that the hands of voters were not always inked uniformly and/or that not all hands were examined. Some stations did not use alcohol to clean the voters' fingers.

Many chairpersons signed and stamped large numbers of ballots. Some were not observed applying the required red stamp, and one reportedly stamped the inside of the ballot.

In some stations only one of the ballot boxes that had been provided was locked. Perhaps this was because only one box was frequently used for both ballots. Observers could not explain why boxes usefully provided were not used. Persons assigned to control the depositing of completed ballots were reported as not always being attentive.

All the required materials seemed to be present in most locations, except for the red stamp, which was not visible at a few stations. In most stations the laws and the voter list were **not** prominently displayed.

### **3. Ballot Secrecy**

The arrangement of the voting booths, which were not always adequately lit, placed them at the opposite side of the room from the table at which polling officials sat. This permitted a clear and unobstructed view of them from the officials' table, and ensured adequate secrecy for the able bodied who could stand and mark their ballots.

No consideration seems to have been given to the convenience and need for secrecy of anyone who was not ambulatory. Wheelchair-bound voters were forced to mark their ballots on their laps, in the open area at the side of the voting enclosure.

### **4. Closing of the Polls**

A deficit of effective training was apparent. Combined with the sheer length of the polling day, these two factors negatively affected the closing procedures. Although these procedures are clearly outlined in the electoral laws and regulations, a significant number of chairpersons seemed to encounter problems with the application or interpretation of laws and regulations. Whether they had been poorly trained or exhausted, the result was disturbing. Of the 14 closings observed by the Mission, four polls experienced considerable difficulty in following the mandated procedures. In one case, an OKB election auditor helped resolve a problem by referring the chairperson to the regulations.

Numerous basic closing procedures were not routinely followed at some stations: the required reconciliations of materials, ballots, and other provisions were often not correctly executed and the mandatory announcements were not made; at some stations, poll watchers had to protest before they were allowed into the station to witness the count; at two stations the *proces-verbaal* could not be completed; in one station the count was not completed on election night.

### **5. National Auditors and Other International Observers**

The OKB, whose mandate includes monitoring the operation of electoral processes, had a large number of auditors deployed throughout the country. It must be noted that, despite the word "independent" in the OKB's name, its budget and, therefore, the compensation of the auditors, were provided by the government.

CARICOM sent a small group of observers for a few days before and on election day. The Mission is also aware that some members of the diplomatic corps observed the elections and that, as in 2000, they were permitted to observe on their own but not to join an international mission, such as that of the OAS.

### **6. Infirm and Mentally Challenged Voters**

Suriname's election law and regulations stipulate that for elections to be free, general, and secret the voter should enjoy "independent determination of choice, no one should know how the voter's vote is cast and suffrage should be exercised by all, except those excluded by order of the Court etc."



Many Mission observers reported that the law was interpreted and applied to the seriously infirm and the mentally challenged in a way that led them to wonder exactly what instructions had been given to polling station officials. Specifically, there seemed to be no standard criteria by which the chairperson of the polling station could assess at what stage a person's ability "to exercise independent determination of choice" was definitely compromised.

Near-comatose and even apparently completely comatose "voters" were borne into one station on stretchers. Their names were read, their fingers were inked, and ballots were handed to the party agents who brought them. They were then literally parked parallel to the voting booth while the party agent entered, marked the ballots, and placed them into the ballot box. All of this was done without even the pretense of obtaining verification of the alleged voters' preferences.

The right of comatose persons to vote was rigidly protected by those polling officials. This process astonished the OAS observers, who wondered whether it reflected an oversight in training, or a lacuna in the regulations. Similar occurrences were seen elsewhere with mentally challenged voters.

In some cases, handlers, often party agents, accompanied the disabled voter into the booth. One observer reported that a deaf voter was offered assistance in this way. Four physically challenged voters were denied assistance from a particular party agent but were assisted by agents from a different party.

Decisions about who was permitted to assist voters and when assistance would be permitted appeared to be significant, especially in the light of repeated complaints by opposition parties that the recruitment of polling station chairpersons and clerks had reflected partisan preference.

### **C. VOTER LIST**

The methodology and procedures used by the CBB to create the list of eligible voters caused considerable questioning about electoral preparations. A controversy was sparked by an OKB study of the final voter list, and calculations by private citizens prior to the election. The chronic doubts about the voter list, also mentioned in the OAS EOM reports on the 1996 and 2000 elections, continued in 2005.

When the exploratory mission was in Suriname and returned for the general elections, the OKB, CBB, the Ministry of Home Affairs, and opposition political parties were wrangling over the number of names and the size of the list.

This controversy had two causes. First, private citizens calculated that the number of names on the list prepared by the CBB was too large, based on population estimates and preliminary census data. Second, the OKB had hired a local computer consultant to review the final list produced by the CBB. The consultant report was said to allege that the CBB list of 333,985 names was flawed by 29,318 names or instances. None of the Mission's preelectoral discussions clarified adequately whether the consultant was reporting on names or undefined instances, and citizens were left in the dark about the procedures and findings of the study. Inexplicably, the study was never circulated or openly discussed and some agencies involved in the electoral process said that they had also not been given access to its methodology or findings.

The calculations and the study spawned two related controversies, one procedural and the other a political perception. The procedural question asked how the CBB's list had been calculated, encouraged by reports that described a few alleged conclusions in the OKB's study as well as unofficial calculations. The political perception question related to the implications that were drawn by Surinamers because of the widespread concern that in the large list might lurk some suspect official motive or plan. The perceptual implications led some Surinamers to use words such as "fraud" and "deprivation of political rights."

Following the announcement by the director of the OKB that the study had found problems, the CBB rejected the findings. When the CBB finally got around to a defense, it was in terms of mathematics, which was alleged to prove the trustworthiness of the list. This mathematical approach failed to satisfy or answer the concerns of most Surinamers, and came much too late in the process to allay popular concerns.

It appeared to the OAS team that the Ministry, the CBB, and the OKB seemed to ignore the manifest problem of perceptions that they had been accused of creating or to which they had contributed. Openness, transparency, and the trust of the electorate suffered as the OKB and CBB hurled charges at one another in the press.

The OKB failed to release its study or to reveal its methodology, while the CBB insisted on the integrity of its list but presented no comprehensible explanation of its methodology. The din of the accusations was so loud that the President, in his constitutional role in elections, ordered the OKB and the CBB to sort things out between themselves. It is unclear what actions followed this request, but the OAS team saw no evidence that any actions that might have been taken effectively answered the public concerns.

The Ministry and the CBB sought to dismiss public and OKB concerns at the briefing for the diplomatic corps mentioned earlier in this chapter, held days before the balloting. It was asserted that the questions about the 29,318 names or instances were specious. The CBB and the Ministry insisted that persons could be inferred to have been correctly placed on the list if they had transacted any business with the CBB during the previous five years. Comments emanating from the audience reflected skepticism about that approach.

#### **D. INEFFECTIVE ACTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTIES REGARDING THE VOTER LIST**

Having pointed out the challenges to the Ministry of Home Affairs, the CBB, and the OKB regarding the list, it is now necessary to report the ineffective way that political organizations raised questions about the list. The political parties and the press were the only significant voices that could have addressed the size of the list, sought remedies, and assisted in obtaining believable answers.

The OAS international observers could do nothing about the list in part because they had not been present when the preliminary list had been published in March. In Suriname in 2005, when members of the opposition asked for OAS intervention based on their assertions, it was not possible for the observers to do anything. In addition, since the OAS had not been in Suriname when the Preliminary and Final Voter Lists had been created, the OAS Mission was not in a position to comment on the procedures that had been used. Likewise, the OAS was in no position to comment in real time on the explanations about the OKB study or the

CBB's methodology offered by those agencies, because it, too, was not included in these matters.

The Chief of Mission frequently asked complainants what they had done about the list during the "claims and objections" period. The parties asserted that the CBB could have done more to make it easier for voters to review the list and make corrections. If the process for examining and correcting the list is unduly cumbersome or ineffective, it should, of course, be effectively addressed in the cause of transparency.

When the Mission asked the parties if they had complained about the preliminary list, the general response was silence. They appeared not to have devoted sufficient energy or vigilance to a careful examination of the list when questions most propitiously could have been raised, and when there was sufficient time to make changes.

In their first meeting with the Chief of Mission, the opposition delegations asserted that the final voter list was too large. Just two days before the general elections, the NDP produced a list of some 8,000 names, which it asserted had been omitted. Thus, opposition organizations were complaining that the list was both too large and too small prior to the general elections.

The Chief of Mission felt that it was her duty to listen to the opposition and provide such assistance as might be possible. In the case of the alleged 8,000 missing names, the Minister of Home Affairs immediately offered to review the list and the Chief of Mission forwarded it to her. Teams of CBB personnel apparently worked through the night to produce explanations of the status of the names. As a result of this commendable effort, the issue of the 8,000 names faded away. This was evidence that responsiveness and transparency can significantly reduce electoral concerns.

#### **E. UNCLAIMED POLLING CARDS**

The Mission must state that, based on the information it could obtain, Suriname's final voter list for 2005 appeared to be larger than it should have been. There is one strong, scientific indication of this. In 2005, as in previous elections observed by the OAS, a very large number of polling cards, possibly up to 20 percent of them, remained unclaimed on election day, despite the best efforts of the district commissioners to distribute them. Undistributed cards were placed at polling stations on election day so that voters could claim them with proper identification. According to the Mission, most polling stations had significant numbers of these cards on hand, but very few were of them claimed by voters. The exact number of unclaimed polling cards was not publicized. This gap, in itself, may validate the concerns expressed in all quarters, except the Ministry of Home Affairs and the CBB, about the size of the list.

#### **F. GENERAL ELECTION RESULTS AND NEGOTIATIONS FOR GRAND COALITIONS**

On election night, it was clear that the Nieuw Front had lost about one-third of its seats in the National Assembly. The National Democratic Party and several combinations of parties had gained at the Front's expense. The final results were transmitted to the President and the OKB by the CPA on June 7. These were reviewed by the OKB and certified as official on June 27.

National Assembly: Seats by Party or Combination:

A-Combination		5
A-1 Combination	3	
NDP	15	
NF		23
VVV	5	

Following the allocation of the seats by the CPA and the proclamation of the official results by the OKB, the process began that would result in the organization of the new National Assembly. The minimum working majority, 26 votes, exceeded the number of seats that had been

won by the Nieuw Front. Not long after the polls closed, this altered political terrain launched tough negotiations between the parties and factions as they sought to form a grand coalition and build a working majority.

Lengthy negotiations by the Front were successful in adding six seats to its coalition, which was renamed Nieuw Front Plus. Five seats came from the A-Combination, a group of Maroon parties led by Ronnie Brunswijk. In addition, one of three members elected by the A-1 Combination, Winston Jessurun, decided to caucus with the Nieuw Front Plus. The resulting grand coalition gave the Nieuw Front Plus 29 votes, while the opposition, led by Desi Bouterse, had 20 votes from the NDP and the group of parties that made up the VVV political coalition. The two other members of the A-1 Combination initially decided not to join either side.

#### **G. POLITICAL PARTY REACTIONS**

Mission observers remained in Suriname for a few days after the May 25 general elections, discussing what they had seen and preparing reports on their observations for the Chief of Mission.

Two days after the elections, as the CPA was still processing the returns from the ten electoral districts, some of the political parties in the opposition (the NDP and the VVV) became restless that the final tally might deprive them of seats that they believed they had won in the early, unofficial count on election night. A large, noisy motorcade flying opposition flags roared through Paramaribo, honking horns, rushing to protest at the CPA. Its director, Lothar Boksteen, addressed all of their questions with thorough professionalism, calm, and transparency, abating any tensions. Lengthy coverage appeared on local television, which was extraordinarily helpful.

That day, NDP representatives met with the Chief of Mission to express the same concerns. She listened attentively to their complaints, and the party representatives seemed satisfied when they learned that the Mission was monitoring the situation closely.

The Chief of Mission again visited with the director of the OKB, who reported that she would be meeting shortly with the coordinators of OKB auditing teams to receive their final reports, which would be critical for certifying the official election results.

Mission observers had completed the first phase of their work, but some team members would return for the steps that involved the election of the president and vice president.

### **CHAPTER IV. THE ELECTION OF PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT**

The first round of presidential voting in the National Assembly was held on July 19. By that time, the body had already been sworn in. The Chief and Deputy Chief of Mission attended. The constitution provides for two meetings of the Assembly for this purpose.

#### **A. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION – JULY 19, 2005**

During the campaign, it was anticipated that the incumbent President,

Ronaldo Ronald Venetiaan, and Ramdien Sardjoe, the Speaker of the National Assembly, would be the Front's candidates. The opposition's slate of candidates was not as clear. During the general election

campaign, Desi Bouterse was widely advertised as the NDP's presidential candidate, with posters, hats, and T-shirts proclaiming "Des for Pres." However, Bouterse emphasized that this did not necessarily mean that he would stand for president.

No official nominations for president and vice president could have been made prior to June 27, when the official results were announced. Nominations for the two offices require the support of at least seven members of the National Assembly. On July 15, the Nieuw Front Plus did as expected: the names of Venetiaan and Sardjoe were placed in nomination. However, the opposition members nominated the NDP's former unofficial vice-presidential candidate, Rabindre Parmessar, for president and Wilfried Roseval for vice president.

After the Speaker of the National Assembly opened the session on July 19, a multiparty elections committee, essentially replicating the structure of a polling station, was appointed. It was chaired by Otmar Rodgers, the Front's floor leader. The balloting for president took place first. The names of the members of the Assembly were called in the order in which they had signed in. Each went to the front of the chamber, received a paper presidential ballot, and proceeded to one of two voting booths. After marking them, they placed them into a metal ballot box. Following the announcement of the presidential result, the same procedure was followed for the vice-presidential balloting.

By mid-afternoon, identical results had been announced for both offices, which comported exactly with the division of Nieuw Front Plus seats and those of the opposition. President Venetiaan and Speaker Sardjoe each received 27 votes, Parmessar and Roseval received 20 votes, and two blank votes were cast. Neither the presidential nor the vice presidential candidates for the Nieuw Front Plus chose to vote for themselves for those offices, although both had been elected to the National Assembly. The Speaker announced that the Assembly would meet in two days for its second constitutionally mandated attempt to fill these offices.

#### **B. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION – JULY 21, 2005**

Most Surinamers and the OAS Mission expected the second round of presidential voting on Thursday, July 21, to have the same outcome as the first round.

Once again, the Speaker gaveled the National Assembly into session and the President took his seat in the gallery. However, when the Speaker recognized Otmar Rodgers, the chair of the elections committee, he announced that a matter of grave concern had come to his attention. Rodgers asserted that the opposition's presidential candidate, Rabindre Parmessar, held a Dutch passport and had received a Surinamese visitor's visa in the Netherlands late in 2004. Rodgers declared that this would disqualify Parmessar as a candidate and provided photostatic copies of the documents.

The Assembly erupted in confusion. For many hours, the membership recessed to anterooms to discuss the matter. During one of the periods in which the body reconvened, accusations flew between the Front and opposition members concerning Parmessar's citizenship. At one point, the Speaker asked Parmessar if he was a Dutchman. Parmessar responded that he was a Surinamer, and he handed the Speaker his Surinamese passport.

The NDP, spearheaded by its leader, Desi Bouterse, and floor leader, Jennifer Simons, insisted that Surinamese law only required a candidate to be a Surinamer, which, they stated, Parmessar clearly was. He was born in the country before independence and his family and business have continued in the country ever since, they reported.

Rodgers and some other members of the Front contended that dual nationality is not permitted under Surinamese law and that holding a Dutch passport was an indication of loyalty to the Netherlands. They also claimed that Parmessar's Dutch passport and visa application represented an affirmation of his loyalty to the Netherlands and verified his Dutch citizenship. Rodgers's assessment was that Parmessar was therefore no longer a Surinamer.

After hours of mostly private deliberations, the Speaker announced that the meeting would be adjourned and the matter postponed to a subsequent meeting of the Assembly on July 26.

### **C. SPECULATION AND REACTION**

Over the weekend, the two seemingly contradictory themes that had been raised in the Assembly were discussed in the media. Parmessar gave a television interview, admitting that he was a Dutch citizen and claiming that his Dutch passport was only "for convenience." He repeated that Surinamese law only requires the president to be a Surinamer.

Quite a few commentators contended that the onus was on Parmessar to relinquish his Dutch citizenship and passport since dual citizenship is not allowed. Academics and political observers were split. The constitution, legislation, and electoral decrees had not been tested on these points. As a result, experts could not cite case law or court rulings that clearly backed either interpretation.

Initial public reaction seemed to be negative towards Parmessar. But in a very short time, the split among experts left the public in a quandary. Wanting to be fair, people turned to experts, but the experts differed. Then, the Minister of Justice told the press that he would feel more comfortable if a court could determine the relevance of Parmessar's situation to his candidacy.

Bouterse decried the allegations as evidence of "old politics." He and the opposition insisted that Parmessar, as a Surinamer, was fully qualified. The opposition also said it had carefully examined the matter before placing his name in nomination. They insisted that the legitimacy of Parmessar's eligibility to be a candidate had been verified by officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the CBB prior to the general elections and again when reviewing his documentation for the presidential election.

Several respected legal scholars seemed to support the opposition's interpretation of events or at least noted that the matter was not as clear cut as Rodgers had presented. Further, there was speculation as to whether a decision in the National Assembly to disqualify Parmessar would be politically acceptable to the citizenry if a decision would be reached based on the small working majority held by the Nieuw Front Plus.

### **D. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION – JULY 26, 2005**



In the end, Suriname's historic predilection for compromise provided the blueprint for the events of July 26, reflecting a great deal of discussion and negotiation between the factions in the intervening period.

At the opening of the session, the Speaker announced that he would allow each side to make a statement before he closed the debate on the Parmessar matter and that the Assembly would then proceed to the second presidential ballot. Following speeches by Rodgers, Bouterse, and Simons, voting resumed as if the previous Thursday's meeting had never taken place. As had been the case a week earlier, no candidate for either office garnered a two-thirds majority. Venetiaan received 27 votes for president and Parmessar received 20. Sardjoe received 27 votes for vice president and Roseval received 20. For both offices, the unaffiliated members of A-1 cast blank ballots.

After the results were read out, the Speaker announced that the United People's Assembly (VUV) would convene at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, August 3, to elect the president and vice president.

#### **E. THE VUV**

The United People's Assembly (VUV) convened in the Anthony Nesty Sports Complex, and the members of the National Assembly and district and local councils were present. As this was a continuation of the presidential election process that had begun in the National Assembly, the Speaker brought the meeting to order.

Delegations were seated by district, with members of different political organizations sitting together peacefully. Quite a number of members wore shirts or other indications of party preference. The national anthem was sung and the chairperson of the VUV (the Speaker of the National Assembly) explained the rules of procedure. As in the Assembly, a multiparty polling station was installed again, chaired by Otmar Rodgers.

Districts were called by name, and the members walked to the front of the hall, led by their National Assembly members. Rodgers called the name of each member, who received two ballots each: a blue ballot for president and a white one for vice president. The participants marked their ballots and placed them in two ballot boxes, identified by the color of each type of ballot.

The presidential ballots were counted first. Rodgers opened each folded ballot and announced in a loud voice the name of the candidate who received each vote. This process consumed quite a bit of time and as the number needed for a win came closer, supporters of the Nieuw Front Plus became more vocal in their support of President Venetiaan's candidacy or voiced mild negative reactions when the name of candidate Parmessar was called.

The chairperson of the elections committee and the chairperson of the VUV both officially announced the election of Runaldo Ronald Venetiaan as the President of the Republic of Suriname (see results below).

Enthusiastic cheering broke out, and the President waved to the crowd from his seat in the bleachers. Parmessar walked over and congratulated the winner. After the announcement of the presidential result, one of the uncommitted A-1 members approached Bouterse, who was sitting with the Saramacca delegation, and indicated their desire to affiliate with the opposition.

The opposition's vice-presidential candidate then had a letter delivered to the Speaker, indicating that he was withdrawing from the race. However, the vice-presidential ballots had not been tallied and announced, so rather than proclaiming a win for Sardjoe by acclamation, it was decided that the vice-presidential ballots would be counted and results announced "just to be sure." The results were:

	<b>Candidate Name And Affiliation</b>	<b>DNA Votes, July 19</b>	<b>DNA Votes, July 26</b>	<b>VVV Votes, August 3</b>
<b>Presidential Candidates</b>	Ronaldo Ronald Venetiaan (incumbent) (NF)	27	27	560
	Rabindre Parmessar (NDP)	20	20	315
	BLANK VOTES	2	2	4
<b>VP Candidates</b>	Ramdien Sardjoe (NF)	27	27	591
	Wilfried Roseval (NDP)	20	20	285
	BLANK VOTES	2	2	4

The chairperson of the VVV announced that the installation of the new President and Vice President would take place on August 12.

## **CHAPTER V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The OAS Electoral Observation Mission commends the Government and people of Suriname for their firm commitment to the electoral process. All observers were impressed by the enthusiasm shown for voting and the high level of tolerance toward differing opinions. Polling was orderly and respectful, both on the part of voters and polling station personnel. This was due in no small measure to the seriousness with which everyone involved in the very complex electoral systems and procedures executed their functions. The participation of the security forces was exemplary and deserves special commendation.

### **A. CONCLUSIONS**

Regarding the institutional memory on election administration, the incumbents of three of the four top posts changed between the elections of 2000 and 2005. The Minister of Home Affairs and the director of the CBB were apparently new to election administration, but their appointment shortly after the 2000 elections permitted them to gain practical experience before 2005.

However, the chairperson of the OKB, who had been one of the most experienced persons in the field of election law and administration in Suriname, was not reappointed. The law required the filling of positions before the 2005 elections. A new director was appointed shortly before the date for elections was announced. The delay in the appointment meant that the new director had much less time than would have been ideal in order to set up and get her structure under control. The ability and dedication of the new director must be commended for the performance of the OKB in the electoral process, especially as there appeared to be some considerable tension among the officials of the Ministry, the CBB, and the new head of the OKB. This was especially evident in the matter of the size of the voter list.

The public's acceptance of the complexities of the electoral system is highly commendable. Likewise, the equanimity with which citizens addressed the "citizenship" question of a presidential candidate affirms the tendency of Surinamers to act with fairness, considerable tolerance and caution. The Mission particularly noted that political rallies or "mass meetings" were very well ordered. Participants were tolerant when persons identifying themselves with opposing political organizations showed up.

On election day, the failure of some polling station officers to adhere to extremely demanding procedures often resulted in long delays in checking and counting votes and contributed to human error, as reported by Mission observers. The exhaustion caused by a very long polling day was apparently complicated by fundamental gaps in the training of polling station personnel.

Mission observers heard many complaints that only one political coalition controlled the lion's share of the key election administration positions and bodies from top to bottom and that only a few parties filled the slots at the polling stations. Especially in a society committed to compromise, negotiation, and respect for diversity, strict attention should be paid to ensuring that fairness and equity are seen to be applied in the filling of posts. This would be an important way in which election administrators could prove their commitment to transparency and in so doing nurture the trust of citizens and electors in the electoral system.

In 2005, the CBB had assumed the responsibility for compiling the voter list from CEBUMA, the government's computer center. This was an opportunity to produce a list that would earn public confidence.

The Mission was astonished when the director of the CBB said that he had requested the most recent census data, as recommended in the OAS report in 2000, against which to check the CBB's list, but that he was told that it would not be available until well after the May 2005 general elections. The 2000 report had stated, "a current and accurate census would seem to be one of the most important ways of having an up-to-date civil registry." The Mission was told that a census existed and should have been available at least by early 2005. It would appear that the CBB passively accepted that the information could not be made available and did not follow up. The existence of a January 2005 Census Bureau publication, providing much of the relevant information, left the impression that the data should have been available, at least for the internal use of government agencies.

The Mission noted questions about the voter list and believes that the list was probably too large. The Ministry of Home Affairs, the CBB, and the OKB all contributed to the perception that there were problems with the voter list but then did not effectively deal with the technical matters or the inevitable perceptions that followed. In its auditing role, the OKB had the legal right to commission a study of the final list but failed to release the results of the study or its methodology. The public was aware that there was a problem but was never informed on what basis that determination had been made.

The Ministry and the CBB had every right to defend their work, but their reliance on inventive explanations (offered almost on the eve of the elections) failed to answer the questions that individual calculations and the OKB study had precipitated. All three agencies squabbled publicly. They seemed to miss completely

the importance of the perceptions that doubt about the list provoked. Instead of leading and being transparent, they allowed questions to remain unresolved.

The Mission believes that a much more efficient and confident reliance on transparency by the agencies responsible for election administration or oversight could have significantly put to rest most of the public's concerns.

The patience and maturity of Surinamers prevented the matter of the voter list from creating a tinge of impropriety over the elections.

In contrast, the Mission is obliged to note that the Central Polling Authority (CHS) carefully addressed questions from the public and political organizations with openness and professionalism. This institution and its leaders appeared exemplary to Mission observers. The credibility and transparency of this institution cannot be overemphasized as having a positive role in Suriname.

With respect to the controversy about the qualifications or eligibility of persons nominated to the office of president, the Mission suggests a review of the qualifications of candidates for public office to remove any ambiguity.

## **B. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2000 ELECTION CYCLE**

The Mission is of the view that the major goal of electoral observation is to examine an electoral system and suggest ways to strengthen institutions and practices, and to increase transparency.

Especially because the Minister of Home Affairs and other Surinamese election officials had stated to the Chief of Mission that the authorities had adopted all of the OAS recommendations from its report on the 2000 election cycle, it is especially important to note two of them before making recommendations based on the 2005 observation. Readers are invited to look at these and other recommendations from 2000 as assessment tools to evaluate the 2005 elections.

### **1. Planning, Training, and Preserving Institutional Memory**

The 2000 report noted the importance of preserving institutional memory on elections and election administration among the four major components of the electoral system: the Ministry of Home Affairs, the CBB, the OKB, and the CHS. It emphasized the urgent need for retaining, recruiting, and training skilled persons with experience in organizing elections.

### **2. Polling Card/Voter List**

In 2000, the Mission reported that over 40,000 polling cards had not been distributed prior to the May election. It called that number "exceedingly high." The report noted that "it is primarily the responsibility of election officials to make every effort to get them into the proper hands in time." It also noted difficulties with identifying places to which cards could be delivered and that the list of eligible voters had been produced at the government computer center (CEBUMA).

**C. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2005 ELECTION CYCLE**

- An indicator that the voter list may indeed have been too large is the number of undistributed, uncollected polling/voter cards. The OKB, in its role as elections auditor, should consider testing this theory by examining these cards and striking the names of those persons from the list. This list could be publicly circulated and the persons affected given a specified period of time to appear in person at the CBB or district commissioner's office to be reinstated on the list.
- Political organizations would benefit by using the periods of time provided between the publication of the preliminary and final list to check the names thoroughly. Their job is to win elections and they probably have the most sophisticated knowledge of the electorate.
- In the future, the CBB should make every effort to carry out an internal check of the voter list against census data, prior to publishing the preliminary list.
- More efficient, gracious, and confident application of transparency by electoral agencies could have significantly put to rest most public concerns, particularly regarding the voter list.
- One of the alternates on the polling station staff could be assigned to assisting persons whose names do not appear on that station's list to identify their voting locations (possibly by consulting the list for the entire district or contacting the CBB).
- At each polling station one voting booth should be specially configured to accommodate wheelchair-bound and other physically challenged persons.
- Clear procedures need to be elaborated to guide polling station staff with respect to assisted voting, that is, who should be assisted and by whom.
- A clear standard needs to be set to determine when a potential voter's ability to "exercise independent determination of choice" is compromised. This is necessary when dealing with the seriously infirm.
- Aggressive, transparent efforts should be made to correct the impression that polling station staff is recruited predominantly from the ruling parties of the political spectrum.
- For the consistent and thorough application of laws and regulations, additional attention must be paid to the training of polling station officials that these staff will have to administer.
- There is need for clarification from the chairperson of the polling station regarding exactly when the red stamp should be affixed.

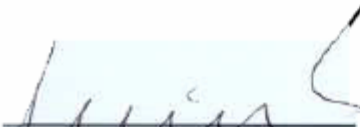
**CHAPTER V. FINANCIAL REPORT  
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES  
SECRETARIAT FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS**



**CONTRIBUTION FROM  
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
Electoral Observation Missions - AG/RES. 1637 (XXIX-O/97)  
Suriname 2005**

**STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN FUND BALANCE  
From Award Inception (April 28, 2005) to May 31, 2006**

<b>Increases</b>		
<i>Contribution</i>		\$ 150,000
<b>Decreases</b>		
<i>Expenditures</i>		
Personnel Contracts	\$ 6,592	
Travel	28,390	
Equipment, Supplies and Maintenance	17,584	
Building and Maintenance	743	
Performance Contracts	58,204	
Other Expenses	<u>3,214</u>	
<b>Total Decreases</b>		<u>114,727</u>
<b>Net change during period</b>		35,273
<b>Unliquidated Obligations</b>		<u>410</u>
<b>Fund balance at end of period</b>		\$ <u>34,863</u>

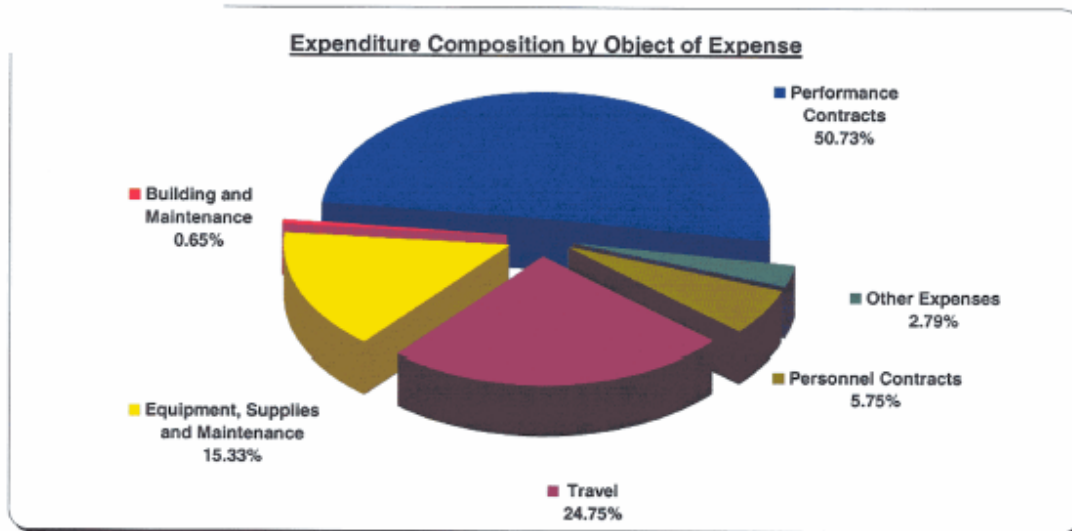
  
Certified by: Aronís Mundeán, Director  
Department of Budgetary and Financial Services

Project UPD-EC/008  
Award USDEP05/06  
Preparer SO

**ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES  
SECRETARIAT FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS**



**CONTRIBUTION FROM  
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
Electoral Observation Missions - AG/RES. 1637 (XXIX-O/97)  
From Award Inception (April 28, 2005) to May 31, 2006**



**DESCRIPTION OF OBJECTS OF EXPENDITURE**

**Personnel Contracts-** Personnel contracts and overtime.

**National and International Travel** - This category includes expenditures related to travel and per diem expenses for international supervision, control administration, as well as local travel and contracted personnel for internal program administration.

**Equipment, Supplies and Maintenance** - This category includes: a) fuel, lubricant, insurance, and vehicle maintenance; b) helicopter services related costs; c) field equipment, and supplies.

**Building & Maintenance** - Includes repairs and maintenance for fixed installations of the office, as well as rent and service payments such as water, electricity and communication costs.

**Performance Contracts** - This category includes: a) local contracts for administrative, security, drivers personnel, and translation services; b) international contracts in the field and at headquarters-OAS; c) life and health insurance for both international and national personnel.

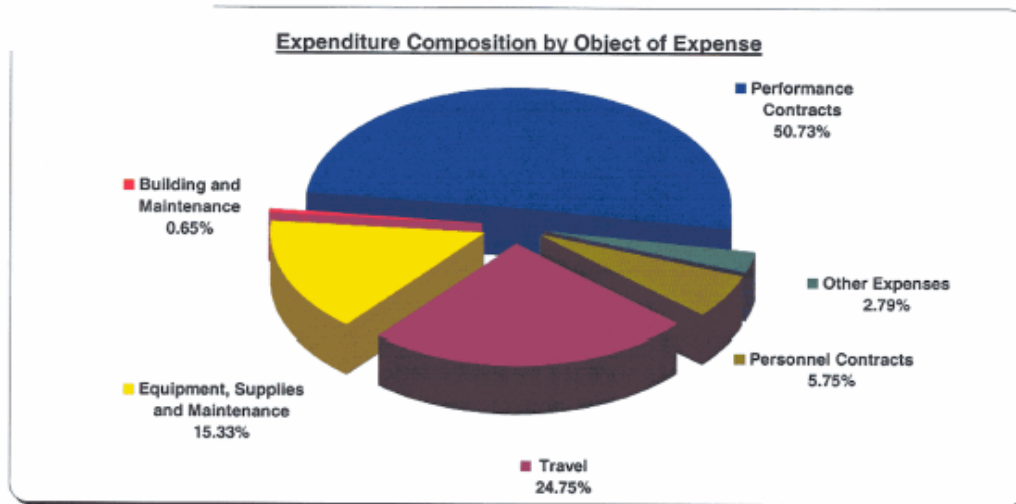
**Other Expenses** - Shipping costs, conference and seminar fees, customs fees, advances, exchange rate difference and miscellaneous expenses.



**ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES  
SECRETARIAT FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS**



**CONTRIBUTION FROM  
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
Electoral Observation Missions - AG/RES. 1637 (XXIX-O/97)  
From Award Inception (April 28, 2005) to May 31, 2006**



**DESCRIPTION OF OBJECTS OF EXPENDITURE**

**Personnel Contracts-** Personnel contracts and overtime.

**National and International Travel** - This category includes expenditures related to travel and per diem expenses for international supervision, control administration, as well as local travel and contracted personnel for internal program administration.

**Equipment, Supplies and Maintenance** - This category includes: a) fuel, lubricant, insurance, and vehicle maintenance; b) helicopter services related costs; c) field equipment, and supplies.

**Building & Maintenance** - Includes repairs and maintenance for fixed installations of the office, as well as rent and service payments such as water, electricity and communication costs.

**Performance Contracts** - This category includes: a) local contracts for administrative, security, drivers personnel, and translation services; b) international contracts in the field and at headquarters-OAS; c) life and health insurance for both international and national personnel.

**Other Expenses** - Shipping costs, conference and seminar fees, customs fees, advances, exchange rate difference and miscellaneous expenses.

**Appendix I**

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**OAS Observers and Polling Stations Visited**



## A. Observers

1	PARAMARIBO	1	Corinne McKnight	Chief of Mission –Trinidad and Tobago
			Bruce Rickerson	Deputy Chief of Mission – OAS/United States
		3	Christopher Healy	Logistics Coordinator – United States
		4	Edward Aaron	Antigua and Barbuda
		5	Annetta Just	Denmark
		6	Joan Richardson	Trinidad and Tobago
		7	Franka Thompson	Trinidad and Tobago
2	WANICA	6	Mersada Elcock	Barbados
		7	Christina Gumbmann	United States
3	NICKERIE	8	Merlin Brinkerhoff	Canada
		9	Antonio Carmona	Puerto Rico/United States
4	CORONIE	10	Rita Seraphin	Dominica
5	SARAMACCA	11	Ana Borges	Brazil
6	COMMOWIJNE	12	Femke Bakker	Puerto Rico/The Netherlands
7	PARA	13	Arnold Campbell	United States
8	MAROWIJNE	14	Roberto Pablo	Aruba

## B. Number of Polling Stations Visited on Election Day


DISTRICT	Number of Polling Stations	Polling Stations scheduled to be visited	Polling Stations Visited
COMMEWIJNE	36	30	26
CORONIE	4	4	4
MAROWIJNE	39	35	31
NICKERIE	22	16	15
PARA	23	21	21
PARAMARIBO	261	261	261
SARAMACCA	20	20	20
WANICA	96	60	52
TOTAL	501	447	430



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**Appendix II**  
**Political Parties and Combinations**



<b>COALITION/ COMBINATIE</b> NIEUWE FRONT (NF)/	<b>PARTY</b> Nationale Partij Suriname (NPS) /	<b>LEADER</b> RONALD R. VENETIAAN	<b>DNA SEATS WON IN 2005</b>
Alternatief (A-1)/ <b>A-1 Combination</b> 	Democraten 21 (D21)/ <b>Democrats of the 21st Century</b>	S. Moestadja	3
	<a href="#">Democratisch Alternatief '91 (DA91)</a> / <b>Democratic Alternative '91</b>	W. Jesserun	
	Politieke Vleugel van de FAL (PVF) / <b>Political Wing of the FAL</b>	J. Sital	
	Trefpunt 2000 (T2000) - Partij voor Democratie en Welzijn (PDW) / <b>Meeting Point 2000 - Party for Democracy and Well-Being</b>	A. Jesserun	
	Amazone Partij Suriname (APS) / <b>Amazon Party of Suriname</b>	K. van Genderen	
A Combinatie/ <b>A-Combination</b> 	Algemene Bevrijdings- en Ontwikkelingspartij (ABOP) / <b>General Liberation and Development Party</b>	R. Brunswijk	5
	Vereniging voor Broederschap en Eenheid in de Politiek / <b>Brotherhood and Unity in Politics</b>	C. Alendy	
	<b>Seeka (Seeka)</b>	P. Abena	

### A. Political Parties and Combinations: 2005 General Elections



<p><b>NEW FRONT /</b></p> 	<p><b>National Party of Suriname</b></p>		
	<p>Verenigde Hervormings Partij (VHP) / <b>Progressive Reform Party</b></p>	R. Sardjoe	
	<p>Surinaamse Partij van de Arbeid (SPA) / <b>Surinamese Labor Party</b></p>	S. Gids	
	<p><b>Pertjaja Luhur (PL)</b></p>	P.S. Somohardjo	
<p>Volksalliantie Voor Vooruitgang (VVV) / <b>People's Alliance for Progress</b></p> 	<p>Basispartij voor Vernieuwing en Democratie (BVD) / <b>Basic Party for Renewal and Democracy</b></p>	T. Gobardhan	5
	<p>Kerukanan Tulodo Pranatan Ingit (KTPI) / <b>Party for National Unity and Solidarity</b></p>		
	<p>Democratisch Nationaal Platform 2000 (DNP2000) / <b>Democratic National Platform 2000</b></p>	J.A. Wijdenbosch	
	<p><b>Pendawa Lima (PL)</b></p>	R. Sapoen	
<p>(Independent)</p> 	<p>Partij <b>Pembangunan Rakat Suriname (PPRS)</b></p>	R. Kaaiman	15
	<p>Nationale Democratische Partij (NDP) / <b>National Democratic Party</b></p>	Delano D. Bouterse	

**Appendix III**

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**Official Letters of Invitation and Acceptance**



**A. Letter of invitation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname to the General Secretariat of the OAS to send an Electoral Observation Mission.**

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PAG. 01  
410 930

10



No. 3950

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname presents its compliments to the General Secretariat of the Organisation of American States and has the honour to inform the Secretariat of the following.

For a number of years, the Republic of Suriname and the Organisation of American States have intensively worked together on the strengthening of democracy in Suriname.

In this regard, the Organisation of American States has already given its support in the general elections of 1987, 1991, 1996 and 2000 through, inter alia, the presence of Observer Missions, for which the Government of Suriname once again expresses its appreciation.

The next general free and fair elections in Suriname will be held in the first half of 2005.

The Government of Suriname takes great pleasure in inviting the General Secretariat to send an Observer Mission to Suriname to witness the aforementioned elections.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the General Secretariat of the Organisation of American States the assurances of its highest consideration.

Paramaribo, 6 May 2004

To: The General Secretariat  
of the Organisation  
of American States



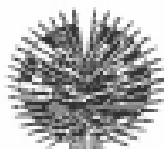
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**B. Letter from Luigi Einaudi, Acting Secretary General, accepting the invitation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname to send an Electoral Observation Mission.**

1/15/2005 14:59 FAX 202 488 3011

ASS'T. SEC. GEN. OAS

001



ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ACTING SECRETARY GENERAL

March 15, 2004

Excellency:

I have the honor to refer to Note Verbale #3250 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname by which an invitation was extended to the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (OAS) to send a team of observers for the general elections to be held on May 25, 2005. I also refer to my letter of December 10, 2004, in which I informed Your Excellency of the intention of the OAS to deploy an electoral observation mission, subject to the receipt of sufficient funds.

I am pleased to advise that I have designated Ambassador Corinne McKnight of Trinidad and Tobago as the Chief of Mission. Ambassador McKnight has extensive experience in diplomatic affairs and was Chief of the OAS Electoral Observation Mission in Grenada in 2003.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

  
Luigi R. Einaudi

His Excellency  
Henry Lothar Illes  
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of  
Suriname to the Organization of American States  
Washington, D.C.

**Appendix IV**

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**Letter from political parties to the OAS Mission**



**A. Letter from political parties to the OAS Mission, May 15, 2005.**

The Organization of  
American Status (OAS)  
Noorderkerkstraat  
Paramaribo

Paramaribo May 15, 2005

Political parties participating in the elections of May 25, 2005, with the exception of the parties making up the Nieuw Front, the current government, are gravely concerned about the organization of the general, free and secret elections of May 25, 2005.

This concern results from the fact that the *Onafhankelijk Kiesbureau (OKB)* (Independent Polling Committee) has reported to the President of the Republic of Suriname in writing of May 2, 2005 that 29,318 persons ineligible to vote, have been included in the register of voters, faults occurring on these registers exactly concern persons living in areas where oppositional parties are well supported.

**Some examples of the faults already detected are amongst other things:**

Faults in the files of voters

- Persons having a right to vote have not been included in the file of voters
- The ID number in the file of voters and the ID number on the ID card are not the same
- The ID number differs from that on the certificates of residence
- The ID number is linked to another person
- Voters have more than one ID card, each bearing different ID numbers
- The ID number indicates another sex
- Cases of removal have not been incorporated in the register of voters
- Polling cards have been made for persons died at an early age (amongst other two-year-olds)
- The sex of 573 voters has not been included in the register of voters

Faults in the polling cards

- Polling cards are not to be had on the District's Commissioner's office
- Voter is not known on address

Complaints of delivery persons on handing around polling cards

- District of Sipaliwini: 2,050 of the 3,000 polling cards could not be handed out and have been brought back by the delivery persons. The polling cards of the voters living in the *Tjongalangaweg* have been brought back as there was no transport available to distribute them.

Via the OKB we have attempted at getting the government to correct the above mentioned faults and those recorded by the OKB, but much to our regret these efforts have been without success.

This version is subject to revision and will not be available to the public pending consideration, as the case may be, by the Permanent Council



As the undersigned do not believe in a fair proceeding of the general, fair and secret elections under the present conditions, they have decided the following:

1. Calling on intervention on a national level
2. calling on intervention on an international level

Because of the above-mentioned, the undersigned have held a meeting and decided to approach the OAS in its status of observer at the coming election, to take the appropriate measures so as to make possible that the general, free and secret elections yearned for so much, will still take place in a fair way,

Volksalliantie Voor Vooruitgang  
VVV  
O.F. van Amson

Progressieve Arbeiders en Landbouwers Unie  
PALU  
A. Paal

Nieuw Suriname  
NS  
L.A. Soechitram

National Democratische Partij  
NDP  
R.A. Abrahams

---

**Appendix V**  
**Legal Agreements**



**A. "Agreement Between the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States and the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission of Suriname on the Electoral Observation Process"**

AGREEMENT BETWEEN  
THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE  
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES  
AND THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS AND THE  
INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF SURINAME  
ON THE ELECTORAL OBSERVATION PROCESS

The Ministry of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission of Suriname and the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States ("GS/OAS"),

CONSIDERING:

THAT on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of May 2004, the Government of Suriname ("the Government") through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs invited the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States ("the General Secretariat") to send an Electoral Observation Mission of the OAS ("the Mission") with the purpose of witnessing the elections to be held on May 25, 2005;

THAT in Resolution AG/RES. (XIX-O/89) the General Assembly of the OAS reiterated to the Secretary General the recommendation that "when a member state so requests in the exercise of its sovereignty, missions should be organized and sent to said state to monitor the development, if possible at all stages, of each of its electoral processes;"

THAT the Secretary General welcomed the Government's request, and arranged to send a Mission to Suriname with the objective of observing the elections on May 25, 2005;

AGREE:

First:            Guarantees

a.) The Ministry of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission guarantees the Mission access to all facilities for the adequate fulfillment of the observation of the elections on May 25, 2005 in Suriname, in conformity with the relevant laws and standards of Suriname and the terms of this Agreement;

b.) The Ministry of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission, on and after the day of the elections and will guarantee the Mission

This version is subject to revision and will not be available to the public pending consideration, as the case may be, by the Permanent Council

access to all polling stations and other locations and facilities related to the election until the official count is tabulated nationally;

c.) The Ministry of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission will guarantee the Mission complete access to the locations in which the process of casting and tabulating votes will take place.

Second: Information

a.) The Ministry of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission will furnish the Mission all information referring to the organization, direction and supervision of the electoral process. The Mission will be able to request of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission such additional information as is necessary for the exercise of its functions;

b.) The Mission has the ability to inform the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission about any irregularities and/or interference, which it might observe or of which it might learn. Similarly, the Mission will be able to solicit from the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission any information regarding the measures, which the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission will take in relation to such irregularities;

c.) The Ministry of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission will provide the Mission with information related to the electoral list and other computerized electoral data referring to the same. Similarly, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission will provide all other information relative to the computer systems used on election day, and will offer demonstrations of the systems' operation to the Mission;

d.) The Ministry of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission will guarantee the Mission access to all electoral bodies responsible for vote counting and tabulation. Similarly, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission will permit the Mission to conduct any evaluations deemed necessary of the voting system and of the communication utilized to transmit electoral results. At the same time, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission will guarantee complete access to the complaints process and quality controls that occur before and after the process and are of interest to the Mission.

e.) The Ministry of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission further guarantee the Mission access to all polling stations and other bodies throughout the national territory of the Republic of Suriname.

Third: General Provisions

a.) The Acting Secretary General designates Ambassador Corinne McKnight as Chief of Mission, who will represent the Mission and its members before the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission and before the Government;

b.) The GS/OAS will communicate to the leadership of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission the names of the persons who will comprise the group of observers, who will be duly identified;

c.) The Mission will act impartially, objectively and independently in the fulfillment of its mandate;

d.) The General Secretariat will send to the leadership of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission a copy of the final report of the Electoral Observation Mission, following the selection of the President and Vice President;

e.) The Ministry of Home Affairs and the Independent Electoral Commission will make known and disseminate the contents of this Agreement among all electoral bodies and among all personnel involved in the electoral process.

Fourth: Privileges and Immunities

Nothing expressly stated or implied in this Agreement shall be construed as a waiver of the privileges and immunities of the OAS or any of its organs may enjoy under the Charter of the Organization, the Agreement between the GS/OAS and the Government in relation to the privileges and immunities of each of the members of the group of observers of the election process in Suriname signed by the parties on the on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2005, or under international law.

Fifth:            Resolution of controversies


The Parties shall attempt to resolve through direct negotiations any disputes arising in relation to the interpretation and/or implementation of this Agreement. If the negotiations do not result in the resolution of the dispute, the matter shall be submitted to arbitration in accordance with the procedure agreed to by the parties.

Thus agreed,

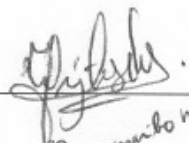
Washington, D.C., \_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_ 2005

FOR THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT  
OF THE ORGANIZATION OF  
AMERICAN STATES

FOR THE MINISTRY OF HOME  
AFFAIRS OF SURINAME

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
FOR THE INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL  
COMMISSION OF SURINAME

  
\_\_\_\_\_

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Paramaribo may 11th 2005.



**B. "Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of Suriname and the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States on the Privileges and Immunities of the Election Process in Suriname"**

AGREEMENT BETWEEN  
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SURINAME  
AND THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE  
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES  
ON THE PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES OF THE ELECTION PROCESS IN SURINAME

WHEREAS:

The Government of the Republic of Suriname (hereafter "the Government") invited the Secretary General of the Organization of American States (hereafter, "the OAS") to support the democratic process in Suriname, in the framework of general elections to be held on May 25, 2005,

The Acting Secretary General of the Organization of American States, in a letter dated December 10, 2004, informed the Government that he accepted the invitation to establish a Group of Observers to conduct an OAS Observer Mission in Suriname (hereafter "the Group of Observers") for these elections, subject to obtaining the necessary resources to finance the establishment of the Mission.

The Group of Observers is comprised of officials of the General Secretariat of the OAS (hereafter the "GS/OAS") and other international observers specifically under contract to the GS/OAS for the OAS Observer Mission in Suriname,

The basic privileges and immunities enjoyed by the OAS, the GS/OAS, and its staff in Suriname are set out in the Charter of the Organization and in the Agreement between the Government and the GS/OAS in Suriname and the Recognition of its Privileges and Immunities signed by the parties on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of February, 1998,



NOW THEREFORE:

The Government and the GS/OAS:

HAVE AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

CHAPTER I:  
PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES

ARTICLE I

The privileges and immunities of the Group of Observers shall be those accorded to the OAS, to the GS/OAS, to its organs and to its staff.

ARTICLE II

1. The property and effects of the Group of Observers, in any part of the territory of Suriname and in possession of any person, shall enjoy immunity against any type of judicial proceeding, save in those specific cases for which said immunity is expressly waived.
2. However, it is understood that said waiver of immunity shall not have the effect of subjecting any such property and effects to any type of measure of execution.

ARTICLE III

1. The premises occupied by the Group of Observers shall be inviolable.
2. Moreover, their property and effects, in any part of the territory of Suriname and in possession of any person, shall enjoy immunity against search and seizure, confiscation, expropriation and against any form of intervention, be it executive, administrative, judicial or legislative.

ARTICLE IV

The files of the Group of Observers and all of the documents pertaining thereto or in its possession shall be inviolable wherever they are located.

ARTICLE V

The Group of Observers shall be:

- a) exempt from any internal taxation, it being understood, however, that they may not claim any type of tax exemption that is in fact a remuneration for public services;
- b) exempt from any type of customs duty, prohibition and restriction in respect of articles and publications that they may import or export for their official use. It is understood, however, that the articles they import duty-free may be sold within the country only in accordance with conditions expressly agreed upon with the Government.

- c) exempt from ordinances, regulations or moratoria of any kind. Moreover, they may have currency of any type, carry their accounts in any foreign currency and transfer their funds in foreign currency.

CHAPTER II  
MEMBERS OF THE GROUP OF OBSERVERS

ARTICLE VI

The members of the Group of Observers shall be those who have been designated by the GS/OAS and accredited with the Surinamese authorities.

ARTICLE VII

For the period during which the members of the Group of Observers exercise their functions and during their trips to and from Suriname, they shall enjoy the following privileges and immunities:

- a.) Immunity from personal detention or arrest as well as immunity from any type of legal proceeding in respect of their actions and statements, be they oral or written, done in the performance of their functions;
- b.) The inviolability of any papers or documents;
- c.) The right to communicate with the GS/OAS via radio, telephone, telegraph, satellite or other means, and to receive documents and correspondence through messengers or in sealed pouches, enjoying for that purpose the same privileges and immunities accorded to diplomatic mail, messages and pouches;
- d.) The right to utilize for their movements throughout the national territory, any means of transportation, be it by air, by water or over land;
- e.) Exemption in respect of their persons and that of their spouses and children, from any type of immigration restriction and registration of aliens and any type of national service in Suriname;
- f.) The same privileges accorded to the representatives of foreign governments on official mission in respect to foreign-currency restrictions;
- g.) The same immunities and privileges in respect of their personal baggage as are accorded to diplomatic envoys; and
- h.) Such other privileges, immunities and facilities as are compatible with the foregoing, and enjoyed by diplomatic envoys, with the exception that they shall not enjoy any exemption from customs duties on imported merchandise (that is not part of their personal effects) or sales taxes or consumer taxes.

ARTICLE VIII

The provisions contained in the preceding article do not apply to nationals of Suriname working as local contract staff in the Group of Observers, save in respect of official acts performed or statements issued in the exercise of their functions.

CHAPTER III  
COOPERATION WITH THE AUTHORITIES

ARTICLE IX

The Group of Observers shall cooperate with the relevant Surinamese authorities to prevent any occurrence of abuse in respect of the specified privileges and immunities. Similarly, the relevant authorities shall do whatever is possible to provide the cooperation requested of them by the Group of Observers.

ARTICLE X

Without prejudice to the immunities and privileges accorded, the Group of Observers shall respect the laws and regulations existing in Suriname.

ARTICLE XI

The Government and the GS/OAS shall take any measures necessary to procure an amicable arrangement in the proper settlement of:

- a) Any disputes that may arise in contracts or other questions of private law;
- b) Any disputes to which the Group of Observers may be party with respect to matters in which they enjoy immunity.

CHAPTER IV  
NATURE OF PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES

ARTICLE XII

1. The privileges and immunities are granted to the members of the Group of Observers in order to safeguard their independence in the exercise of their functions of observing the Surinamese Election Process and not for personal gain or to perform activities of a political nature within the territory of Suriname.
2. Therefore, the GS/OAS shall waive the privileges and immunities of any of these in the event that in its judgment the exercise of those privileges and immunities obstruct the course of justice.

CHAPTER V

GENERAL PROVISIONS

ARTICLE XIII

1. The Government recognizes the "Official Travel Document" issued by the GS/OAS as a valid and sufficient document for purposes of travel by the members of the Group of Observers who possess one.
2. The Government will issue to each member of the Group of Observers a visa to enter the country and to remain therein until the end of the Mission.

ARTICLE XIV

1. The Government agrees to extend the privileges and immunities of the present Agreement to members of the Group of Observers designated by the GS/OAS, who have been accredited by the Surinamese authorities, to attend the election by the members of the National Assembly of Suriname of the President and Vice-President of the Republic.
2. In the event that the 2/3's majority required to elect the President and the Vice-President is not achieved in the National Assembly vote and an election of the President and Vice-President by the United People's Assembly is then required to be held, the Government agrees that it will immediately begin discussions with the GS/OAS concerning arrangements for a Group of Observers to come to Suriname to conduct an observer mission for that election.

ARTICLE XV

This agreement may be amended by mutual consent in writing by the Government and GS/OAS.



ARTICLE XVI

This agreement shall enter into force on the date of its signature and shall cease to have effect once the members of the Group of Observers have completed their mission, in accordance with the terms of the request made by the Government.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned, duly authorized, do hereby sign this agreement, in duplicate, in the city of Washington, D.C. on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of the month of \_\_\_\_\_ in the year two thousand five.

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF  
THE REPUBLIC OF SURINAME

FOR THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT  
THE ORGANIZATION OF  
AMERICAN STATES

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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**A. "OAS Election Observers Deployed For Election"- Press Release, April 29, 2005.**

OAS Election Observers Deployed for Election  
April 29, 2005

The 16-member electoral observation mission of the Organization of American States is deployed for Suriname's May 25 elections, according to the Chief of Mission, Ambassador Corinne McKnight.

"Many of the observers have been in the Districts where they have been assigned since May 18," she noted, "and the rest have been in place since May 20."

The observation team contains citizens of nine OAS member and observer countries.<sup>2</sup> "It is an exceptionally experienced team. Many of the observers have extensive experience in electoral observation and several of them have observed elections in Suriname for the OAS more than once," Ambassador McKnight said. She also pointed out that approximately one-quarter of the observers speak Dutch.

The Ambassador noted that "OAS election observers have the responsibility to view the electoral proceedings only in the light of Suriname's election laws and practices." The observer team can only report on what they see, or on questions or complaints that are brought to them. Their activities will be carried out in accordance with two legal agreements that have been signed by the OAS, the Minister of Home Affairs, and the Independent Electoral Council (OKB).

"The electoral mission will provide its reactions to the electoral process and to any matters that it has investigated and substantiated as the observers make their reports," the Chief of Mission said.

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<sup>2</sup> Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Barbados, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Dominica, Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United States

This version is subject to revision and will not be available to the public pending consideration, as the case may be, by the Permanent Council



**B. Final statement by Ambassador Corinne McKnight, Chief of Mission, May 26 2005**

STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR CORINNE McKNIGHT  
CHIEF OF MISSION  
May 26, 2005

Yesterday, thousands of Surinamers voted for members of the National Assembly and local government representatives (ressortraad). The OAS observed the electoral process in hundreds of polling stations (stembureaus) in eight of ten Districts throughout the country.

Although the final results have not been certified, participants have expressed their preferences for parties, combinations, and individual candidates. The 16 OAS observers saw a peaceful process, with the colorful, festive atmosphere for which Suriname is known. The flags, tee shirts, hats and banners that appeared in great numbers were accompanied by a friendly mood of cooperation, regardless of the political preferences of the voters. I commend the people of Suriname for their participation – and especially for their positive attitude toward the consolidation of democracy.

Suriname's electoral laws and practices are precise and complex. To serve the people properly, therefore, continuous, visible demonstrations of sincere transparency are required, especially by those in government and in the electoral administration bodies, which have the legal responsibility for organizing and managing the process.

OAS observers listened carefully to the concerns of a number of political organizations and voters. Many times, we heard statements about the difficulty in obtaining clear, understandable information about voting, beginning with the identification of eligible voters and the availability of polling cards. Our door was open to these and other questions, and we promptly brought them to the attention of the appropriate ministry or agency. Election officials responded quickly to matters that the OAS referred to them. Yet, the feeling persisted throughout the electoral period that matters might have been addressed more quickly and in a clearer manner when they were raised by participants in the political process.

Time and time again, the OAS team asked individual voters and political organizations if they had taken advantage of the opportunities that are

provided in the law to clarify questions about the voter list, identification cards, polling cards, or electoral procedures. We were surprised that quite a few of these matters were not raised in a timely way, and that

fundamental questions were being asked even a day or two before the voting. Just as transparency is not optional for election organizers, energetic vigilance, especially within the times that are specified, is essential for political organizations and voters.

On election day itself, OAS observers appreciated the orderly and generally efficient administration of the polling stations. Everyone knows that election day is extraordinarily long in Suriname. It is not uncommon for polling station officials, security personnel and agents of political organizations to have to spend 18-24 hours from the time that the polling station is prepared for the day until the signing of the statement of poll (process verbaal) and the transmission of the ballot boxes to the District Commissioner.

The OAS congratulates the people of Suriname on their enthusiasm in the May 25 elections and thanks them for the warmth, generosity, and hospitality they extended to the members of the observer team.

The Organization plans to follow events until the President and Vice President are selected.

The OAS Charter enshrines democracy as an essential component of the governments of the hemisphere, and the May 25 elections represent a further stepping-stone on the path of the consolidation of democratic practices for Suriname.

An official report on the OAS electoral observation mission will be presented to the new Secretary General, Jose Miguel Insulza, when electoral activities have been completed by the election of those two officials.