



REPORT

OF THE

CARICOM ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION (CEOM)

TO THE

GENERAL ELECTIONS

OF

ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

9 December 2015



Prepared by Mr. Gasper Jn. Baptiste
Chief Elections Officer, SAINT LUCIA
Chief of Mission, CARICOM Election Observation Mission

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page(s)</u>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	1 - 2
INTRODUCTION	3 - 4
SCOPE OF SERVICES FOR OBSERVER MISSION	4
POLITICAL BACKGROUND	4 - 5
PRE-ELECTION ACTIVITIES	6 - 8
- Meetings with Stakeholders	6 - 7
- Main Issues Raised by Stakeholders	7
- Activities of the CEOM Group	7 - 8
ELECTORAL FRAMEWORK	8 - 11
- Administrative Arrangements	9
- Voters' Lists	9
- Decrease in the Lists	10
- Nomination of Candidates	10
- Parliament	10
- Dissolution of Parliament	10
- Qualification for Election	10 - 11
- Nomination Day	11
- Political Leaders	11
THE VOTING PROCESS	11 - 12
- Polling Day Procedures	11 - 12
- Final Count	12
ELECTION DAY OBSERVATIONS	13 - 15
Opening of the Polls	13
- Polling	13
- Security	13
- Presence of Poll Workers	13
- Identification of Voters	14
- Use of Voting Ink	14
- Instructions to Voters	14
- Assistance in Voting	14
- Secrecy of the Ballot	14
- Campaigning	14
- Performance of Electoral Officials	14
CLOSE OF THE POLLS	14 - 15
- Adherence to Procedures	14
- Counting of the Ballots	15
- Security of Ballots	15
- Preliminary Results	15
Polling Day Conclusions	15

	<u>Page(s)</u>
POST- ELECTION OBSERVATION	16 - 18
- Atmosphere in the Country	16
- Level of Acceptance of the Results	16
- Final Results	16 - 17
CONCLUSION	17
RECOMMENDATIONS	17 - 18
REFERENCES	19
APPENDICES	20 – 29
- i. CEOM Arrival Statement	20 -21
- ii. CEOM Preliminary Statement	22-23
- iii. - vi. Newspaper Clippings	24-27
- vii. Final Count of Votes Table, etc.	28-29

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The CARICOM Election Observation Mission to the St. Vincent and the Grenadines General Elections would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank the Government and people of St. Vincent for the level of cooperation and support during the mission.

We would also like to express our appreciation to the following contributors for a successful observation mission in St. Vincent and the Grenadines:

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs for scheduling the various meetings with stakeholders on behalf of the mission. The Protocol Officers for arranging the diplomatic protocols at the airport upon entry and departure of the members of the mission.
- The staff of the Electoral Office, the Poll Workers, the Political Parties and their Candidates. The many groups representing Civil Society and other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) for helping the mission assess the political climate leading up to the general elections.
- The Supervisor of Elections, Mrs. Sylvia Findlay-Scrubb, the Deputy, Mr. King, staff of the Electoral Office, the Poll Workers, including the agents, for the smooth administration and management of the electoral process.
- The Commissioner of Police for providing security to the mission and in particular, Corporal Gould, Corporal Hannaway, Police Constables Hector and Samuel for their dedication to duty and for being at the disposal of the CEOM during the entire period.
- Members of the CEOM for sharing their expertise and diligence in observing the election process. A bond of friendship has been formed with opportunities to network across the region.
- The support staff of the CARICOM Secretariat for the efficient manner in which they undertook their task.

- Secretary General His Excellency Ambassador Irwin LaRocque for giving members of CEOM the opportunity to serve at the highest level of the electoral system in the region and helping to maintain free, fair and transparent elections.
- The People of St. Vincent and the Grenadines for the mature way in which the Elections were conducted with no reported incidents of violence and the high level of discipline displayed throughout the process
- The management and staff of the New Montrose Hotel in Kingstown for their hospitality.

INTRODUCTION

A Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Election Observation Mission (CEOM) was present in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, responding to a written request from Dr. the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines dated 12th November 2015, seeking the presence of an Election Observation Mission to observe the island's General Elections which was on Wednesday 9th December, 2015.

The team comprised six (6) regional electoral professionals along with two (2) administrative support staff representing the CARICOM Secretariat. The full complement is as follows:

- Mr. Gasper Jn. Baptiste - Chief of Mission, Chief Elections Officer (St. Lucia)
- Ms. Karen V. ManWarren - Registration Officer (Antigua and Barbuda)
- Mr. Larry Smith - Commissioner, Member of the Barbados Electoral and Boundaries Commission
- Ms. Pamela Ogiste - Registration Officer (Trinidad and Tobago)
- Ms. Coydette Green - Procurement Officer and Election Day Supervisor (Jamaica)
- Rev. Sherlyn Hall - Parliamentary Commissioner (Bahamas)
- Mr. Jhonson Alexandre - CARICOM Administrative support Staff
- Ms. Serojnie Seetaram - CARICOM Administrative support staff

The advance group, including Mr. Gasper Jn. Baptiste along with the support staff arrived in St. Vincent over the period 4th to 5th December 2015 with the others arriving on Sunday 6th, December.

Accommodation for the mission was at the New Montrose Hotel in Kingstown in the parish of St. George.

An Arrival Statement was released to the media via a Press Conference on Monday 7th, December, 2015. **(see Appendix I)**

On December 10th, the day following the elections, three (3) members of the Mission departed St. Vincent. The other three members, along with the support staff, left the island on 11th December, 2015.

SCOPE OF SERVICES FOR OBSERVER MISSION

- (i) **Observe** the electoral process, includes the preparations for the start of the polls, the casting of votes, the closure of polling stations, the counting of the ballots and the preparation of the Statement of Poll;
- (ii) **Collect** information on the results at the voting tables to assist in the quantitative verification of the results;
- (iii) **Observe** and **Assess** the outcome of the elections and the initial immediate impact on the social and political environment; and
- (iv) **Collaborate** in the preparation of the Report of the Observer Mission to be prepared by the Chief of Mission, through the submission of the observation sheets, oral and written reports and findings on the day of the elections.

The Mission was also required to prepare and submit a report on the General Elections to the Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), His Excellency Ambassador Irwin LaRocque.

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

St. Vincent and the Grenadines, comprising an area of roughly 390 sq. km or 150 sq. miles, are located 160 km (100 miles) to the west of Barbados or 40km (24 miles) south of Saint Lucia. St Vincent, known by the Caribs as Hairoun (Land of the Blessed), is the largest of more than 30 islands that comprise the nation. The Grenadines, (the largest of which are Bequia, Canouan and Union Island) cover an area of some 44 sq. km, or 17 sq. miles.

The multi-island nation has an estimated population of 112,000, with people of African descent representing some 66 percent of the people. Life expectancy is estimated at 69.6 years according to the 2001 census.

St Vincent and the Grenadines became an independent country on 27th October 1979, after passing through various stages of colonial rule under the British. The government of St Vincent and the Grenadines is a parliamentary democracy within the Commonwealth of Nations.

Queen Elizabeth II is Head of State and is represented by a Governor General, an office with mostly ceremonial functions. The current holder of the position is Sir Frederick Ballantyne.

Control of the government rests with the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The Country's Parliament, (House of Assembly) is a unicameral body with 15 elected members. The parliamentary term of office is 5 years. The current Prime Minister is Honourable Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, elected in 2001 as head of the Unity Labour Party (ULP). The Leader of the Opposition is Mr. Arnhim Eustace.

The 2010 General Elections show that the Unity Labour Party won by capturing eight (8) of the fifteen (15), seats receiving 32,099 (50.96%) of the votes cast, with seven (7) seats going to the National Democratic Party receiving 30,568 (48.53%) of the votes and the SVGP receiving 138 (0.22%) votes. Sixty thousand, nine hundred and ninety-three (62,993) electors cast their ballots (62.33%). There were one hundred and eighty eight (188) rejected ballots.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines maintains close ties to the United States (US), Canada, and the United Kingdom, and cooperates with regional political and economic organizations such as the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and CARICOM. St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a member of the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Nations, the Organization of American States, the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA).

The judicial branch of government is divided into district courts, the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court and the Privy Council in London.

PRE-ELECTION ACTIVITIES

Meetings with stakeholders

Before the full complement of observers arrived on the island, the Chief of Mission and the support staff held meetings with the following stakeholders:

- Mrs. Sylvia Findlay-Scrubb, the Supervisor of Elections, who outlined the preparation for the elections and gave the assurance that everything was in place for the conduct of the poll;
- The Public Relations Officer of the St. Vincent Teachers Union, Ms. Wendy Bynoe;
- The General Secretary of the National Workers Union, Mr. Noel Jackson;
- Members of the National Society of Persons with Disabilities, Messes Beverly Richards, Coleen Olivierre and Volita Tucker, President, Vice President, floor member respectively;
- Mr. Joel Poyotte, General Secretary, Mr. Elroy Boucher, President, and Mr. Aubrey Buring, Treasurer of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Public Service Union;
- The Commissioner of Police, Mr. Michael Charles who assured us that all security arrangements were in place for manning the polling stations with additional police officers roving around the islands.

After the arrival of the other members of the Mission, meetings were held with representatives of:

- The Chamber of Commerce;
- The Commercial Technical & Allied Workers Union;
- The National Society of the Persons with Disabilities;
- The Christian Council and the National Monitoring and Consultative Mechanism (NMCM);
- The Democratic Republican Party (DRP) and the opposition New Democratic Party. The group was unable to meet with the United Labour Party (ULP);
- A consultation meeting was held with other observer groups such as the Organization of American States (OAS), the Commonwealth Secretariat, the British High Commissioner for St. Lucia and St. Vincent, representatives of the United States Embassy based in Barbados and the Brazilian Embassy based in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Main Issues Raised by Stakeholders

Generally, the Stakeholders had confidence in the work of the Supervisor of Elections and by extension, the Electoral Office, with its limited human resource capacity, to conduct free fair and transparent elections. They also expressed satisfaction with the level of preparedness of the electoral machine.

However, some of their major concerns are as follows:

- Excessive spending by candidates and political parties.
- Allegations of bribery.
- The alleged use of government financial and other resources by the incumbent party to aid in its campaign activities.
- The lack of legislation to limit the expenditure by political parties.
- The lack of equal opportunity for women to contest elections on behalf of the major political parties.
- There should be legislation governing the registration of political parties and campaign financing;
- The failure of political parties and candidates to abide by the signed code of conduct.

Activities of the CEOM Group

- The Chief of Mission held his first meeting welcoming members of the core group. After a brief introduction the Chief of Mission gave an overview of the scope of mission, the role and responsibility of the members. The group was brought up to date on held meetings with stakeholders before their arrival. Further, the group held briefings after every meeting with stakeholders.
- Attended a rally of the ruling ULP in Argyle International Airport and one of the opposition NDP at Victoria Park in Kingstown.

- A second meeting, in conjunction with the Police drivers, was to arrange the teams and to outline the routes for a “dry run” the day before the elections. The purpose of the run was to identify the nearest polling stations in the constituencies and to determine the length of time it takes to get there before the opening of the polls.
- Members of CEOM took individual Declaration of Secrecy oaths administered by Ms. Jacqueline Glasgow – Browne, Justice of the Peace, in an effort to have unrestricted access to the polling stations during the voting process.

The deployment was as follows:-

TEAM	ELECTORAL DISTRICT	OBSERVER TEAM	DEPARTURE TIME
1.	NORTH WINDWARD NORTH CENTRAL WINDWARD MARRIAQUA	MR. SHERLYN HALL MS. KAREN MANWARREN	5.00 A.M.
2.	SOUTH CENTRAL WINDWARD SOUTH WINDWARD EAST ST. GEORGE	MR. GASPER JN. BAPTISTE MS. COYDETTE GREEN MR. JHONSON ALEXANDRE	6.00 A.M.
3.	CENTRAL KINGSTOWN WEST KINGSTOWN SOUTH LEEWARD CENTRAL LEEWARD NORTH LEEWARD	MRS. PAMELA OGISTE MR. LARRY SMITH	5.00 A.M.

THE ELECTORAL FRAMEWORK

Elections in St. Vincent and the Grenadines are governed by the Representation of the People Act, 1982, which includes the House of Assembly Election Rules. The Act also makes provisions for the registration of voters and the administrative conduct of elections.

Administrative Arrangements

Section 25 of the Act gives the Supervisor of Elections the responsibility for the general direction and supervision over the administrative conduct of the elections.

Voters' lists

In accordance with section 11(1), Representation of the People Act, 1982, the Supervisor of Elections is required to publish a register of voters, including the names of persons, who appeared on the revised quarterly lists. The Register of Voters must also comprise persons who registered during the 15-day special registration period after the issuing of the Writ of Elections, as provided for by the Act.

There were eighty nine thousand, five hundred and twenty (89,527) registered voters on the final list published on 30 December 2015, comprising 45,823 males and 43,704 females, from a population of 109,373:

Constituency		Male	Female
CK	Central Kingstown	3,314	3,330
CL	Central Leeward	3,192	2,910
EK	East Kingstown	3,297	3, 266
EG	East St. George	3,836	3,953
MQ	Marriaqua	3,083	3,127
NC	North Central Windward	2,775	2,522
NL	North Leeward	3,011	2,693
NW	North Windward	3,326	2,968
NG	Northern Grenadines	2,000	1,841
SC	South Central Windward	3,031	2,757
SL	South Leeward	3,788	3,552
SW	South Windward	3,098	2,940
SG	Southern Grenadines	1,442	1,249
WK	West Kingstown	3,162	3,168
WG	West Kingstown	3,471	3,409
Total		45,823	43,704
Grand total 89,527			

Decrease in the lists

The voters' lists figures of 89,527 registered voters is approximately 23,741 less than the number registered during the 2010 General Elections where the figure stood at 101,052.

Nomination of candidates

Parliament

The composition of Parliament consists of the Senate and the House of Assembly: - fifteen (15) elected Representatives and six (6) Senators appointed by the Governor-General, four (4) on the advice of the Prime Minister and two (2) on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition.

Dissolution of Parliament

The House of Assembly was dissolved on 7 November 2015 making way for general elections on 9 December 2015.

His Excellency the Governor General issued Writs in the names of the Returning Officers for the fifteen (15) constituencies for the conduct of the elections.

Qualification for election

To be qualified for election as a representative in the House of Assembly, the Act states, *Inter Alia*, that no person shall be qualified to be elected, if he: is under any acknowledgement of allegiance, obedience or adherence to a foreign power or state; is a minister of religion; holds or is acting in the office or judge of the supreme court; is an undischarged bankrupt; or, is a person certified to be insane.

Each candidate contesting the election must be nominated in writing by not less than six (6) registered voters in the Constituency in which the said candidate seeks to be elected. The consent of the candidate being nominated is also necessary; and an amount of five hundred Eastern Caribbean dollars (EC\$500.00) must be deposited in cash with each nomination.

Nominated candidates have up to seven (7) clear days before Polling Day to withdraw their candidature by giving notice to the Returning Officer. If at the expiration of the time appointed for nomination only one candidate is duly nominated, the Returning Officer is required to publicly declare such candidate to be the duly elected representative of the particular constituency.

The Act also makes provision for the assignment of symbols to political parties and other people vying as independent candidates.

Nomination Day

The nomination of candidates was held on 20 November 2015 between the hours of 9.00 am and 1.00 pm. A total of forty-three (43) candidates met the requirements for contesting the elections in the fifteen (15) constituencies.

Four political parties contesting the elections were as follows:-

PARTY		NO. OF CANDIDATES
Unity Labour Party (ULP)	-	15
National Democratic Party (NDP)	-	15
Democratic Republican Party (DRP)	-	06
SVG Green Party (SVGP)	-	07
TOTAL		43

Political Leaders

The ULP is headed by Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, Mr. Arnhim Eustace leads the NDP, the DRP is led by former senator Mrs. Anesia Baptiste and the SVG Green Party by Mr. Ivan O'Neal.

THE VOTING PROCESS

Presently there are no procedures in place to facilitate overseas and advance voting in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Polling Day Procedures

Polling stations opened at 7.00 am and closed at 5.00 pm on polling day, December 9th, 2015. In attendance at the polling stations were the Presiding Officers, Poll Clerks (in cases where there were more than 600 electors to a polling station), an Assistant Poll Clerk and the political party agents observing the proceedings on behalf of the nominated candidates.

The polling stations were clearly marked displaying the Polling Station Notices; the instructions to mark the ballot and the 100 yards defined by 'Caution' tape.

During the process voters were required to cast their ballots at the polling station to which their names had been assigned on the Register of Voters. The voter must first present an identification card to the Presiding Officer before being allowed to cast the ballot. Once satisfied that the person is eligible to vote and that there is no evidence of electoral ink on his/her fingers, the voter is instructed on voting procedure and handed a ballot paper stamped with the official mark and the initials of the Presiding Officer.

The Voter is then asked to proceed to the voting booth to mark the ballot for the candidate of choice. The ballot is returned to the Presiding Officer who is required to remove the counterfoil and place the ballot in the ballot box after the voter had immersed the appropriate index or any other finger in the ink. Should the voter refuse to have his/her finger stained; the Presiding Officer is empowered to destroy the ballot handed to him by the voter and to record the particulars on the appropriate form.

After the close of the Poll, the Presiding Officer has to make a preliminary count of the ballots, in the presence of security officers and agents of candidates, and prepare a Preliminary Statement of Poll. The Preliminary Statement of Poll, along with accounts and materials used at the Polling Station, must be placed in the Ballot Box then sealed and delivered by the Presiding Officer to the Returning Officer for the constituency.

Final count

The Returning Officer, upon receiving the Ballot Box, has to undertake a Final Count of the votes in the presence of candidates or their agents. On completion of the Final Count, the results and election documents are to be submitted to the Supervisor of Elections. Candidates who do not receive more than 15% of the votes cast in the constituency will forfeit their deposit. The election documents must be kept in safe custody by the Supervisor of Elections for at least twelve months after the day of any election before being burnt. In the case of the presentation of an election petition questioning the validity of an election, the period for the retention of the documents may be determined by the Court.

ELECTION DAY OBSERVATIONS

The three teams visited one hundred and thirty seven (137) polling stations across thirteen (13) of the fifteen (15) electoral districts. The Mission monitored the day's activities by observing the Opening of the Poll, the Voting Process, the Closing of the Poll and Counting of ballots.

- **Opening of the Polls**

Indications are that polling stations opened on time as voting started promptly at 7:00 a.m. in all the stations in which the opening was observed. The polling stations for the most part were conveniently located and easily accessible to the electorate including the disabled.

- **Polling**

The day's activities went fairly well; in the morning most polling stations had long queues of electors patiently waiting to cast their ballot. The Mission's assessment of the day's activities is that the voters were able to cast their ballots without intimidation or harassment, in a peaceful and discipline manner.

In the morning, the turnout of voters was steady, while a diminution was observed in the afternoon and the poll workers remained resolute and steadily carried out the required procedures, ensuring that all electors who turned out were able to cast their ballot. Nothing of any major concern came to the attention of CEOM on that day.

The Mission found that all of the supplies and materials needed were present in the required quantities.

- **Security**

Adequate security was in place at all locations with the Officers displaying a very professional approach which contributed to the level of calm which accompanied the day's activities.

- **Presence of Poll Workers** - All stations were fully staffed and most had at least two (2) agents present representing the two (2) major political parties.

- **Identification of Voters** - The identification card was used to verify the identity of the voters before issuing the ballot paper.
- **Use of Voting Ink** - The index finger of voters was checked ensuring that the elector had no ink or other substance on their finger that may compromise the use of the voting ink on their finger before receiving a ballot.
- **Instructions to Voters** – The Presiding Officers instructed the electors on the voting procedures in accordance with the Representation of the People’s Act.
- **Assistance in Voting** - People with disabilities were all given assistance in voting without any objections or hindrance by party agents.
- **Secrecy of the Ballot** – the secrecy of the ballot was maintained throughout the voting process and was never compromised at anytime during the observation.
- **Campaigning** – there were no obvious signs of campaigning neither in the polling stations nor within the 100 yards zone.
- **Performance of Electoral Officials** – CEOM found that the polling station officials, including the party agents, were quite competent in carrying out their functions.

Close of the polls

The polls closed at the 5.00 pm. Electors who were on the line at the time of closing were permitted to vote.

- **Adherence to Procedures** – After the last person voted, the polling station staff carried out the closing procedures.
- **Counting of the Ballots** – Preliminary counts were taken at the close of the poll in the presence of the party agents and a Police Officer. After the count, official Statements of the Poll were prepared and signed by the polling station staff, agents and the Police Officer on duty.

- **Security of Ballots** – All the ballots (used and unused) were placed in their respective envelopes, placed in ballot boxes, sealed and signed by those present at the close of the poll and transported to the office of the Returning Officer for safekeeping. The boxes were eventually stored at Police Stations overnight for security reasons.
- **Preliminary Results**
Preliminary results indicated that an estimated 65,684 out of a total of 89,527 registered electors cast their ballots; the voter turnout was as high as 73.37%. The ULP received 34,222 or 52.33% of the votes cast, NDP received 30,974 or 47.37%, the SVGP received 80 (0.12%) and the DRP 153 (0.23%) of the votes cast. There were 291 (0.44%) rejected ballots. The ULP won eight (8) out of the fifteen (15) electoral seats and the NDP the other seven (7) seats.

Polling Day Conclusions

- The overall assessment of the day's activities indicated that the polls were conducted in a free, fair and transparent manner;
- The poll workers, the police, candidates, their agents and other stakeholders, undertook their task with a high degree of professionalism and competence during the election process;
- The people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines must be commended for displaying a level of maturity and respect for the democratic process of elections in their country. The results of the elections reflected the will of the people.

POST-ELECTION OBSERVATION

Atmosphere in the Country

During the final count at the Layou Police Station in the Central Leeward Constituency, a massive crowd had gathered, mostly supporters of the opposition, after they were called out via radio and other social media to give support to their candidate, alleging voting irregularities and that the preliminary results had indicated that Mr. Exeter, the NDP candidate, had won by six (6) votes, this was based on information received from their polling station agents. However, the preliminary results showed that the ULP won the seat with a total of 2,496 votes compared to the NDP's 2,182, a difference of 314. *(Appendices III, IV and V)*

CEOM visited the Layou Police Station to witness firsthand the mood of the people; the counting of the votes and to help bring about a level of calm during this process.

The situation remained tense for the remainder of the day. The local television news broadcast showed protestors clashing with the security forces at the entrance of the road leading to the residence of the Governor General in an effort to sabotage the swearing in of the Prime Minister and his cabinet.

In light of the unrest, the Christian Council released a press statement calling for calm in the country. *(Appendix VI)*

Level of Acceptance of the Results

The acceptance of the results was mixed. The narrow one seat victory has brought about allegations of voting irregularities and the filing of petitions at the High Court by the opposition party, whereas supporters of the victorious ULP are relishing in their one-seat majority. It is anticipated that the agitation and tension will continue for a while before the results are generally accepted.

Final Results

The final results indicated that the ruling Unity Labour Party (ULP) won the election with eight seats, a one seat majority, polling 34,246 (52.12%) of the votes cast, the New Democratic Party (NDP) seven with a total of 31,027 (47.22%), the Democratic Republican Party (DRP) received 154 (0.23%) votes and the St. Vincent Green Party, 77 (0.11%). The DRP and SVGP were not

successful in winning seats. The voter turnout was 65,706 (73.39%), there were 202 (0.33%) rejected ballots (*Appendix VII*)

CONCLUSION

The CEOM would like to conclude that the elections were administered in a very efficient manner by the Electoral Office and the other stakeholders.

The Mission's assessment of the day's activities is that the voters were able to cast their ballots without intimidation or harassment and that the results of the Elections reflect the will of the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are a list of recommendations the Mission has identified, and believes if implemented, will greatly assist in enhancing the electoral process in St. Vincent and the Grenadines:

- Consideration should be given to regulations governing campaign financing and the registration of political parties;
- Reduce the number of electors to a polling station from approximately 600 to a more manageable figure of approximately 300 electors per polling station;
- Provisions should be made for the appointment of an independent Electoral Commission to administer the conduct of elections in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.
- Emphasis should be placed on the use of the ground floor of buildings, with ramps if possible, to be used as polling stations to accommodate the physically challenged and the elderly.
- Demarcation of the 100 yards with paint, the caution tape can easily be removed by mischievous people to bring about a level of confusion for the security forces;

- The security forces should be better trained in relation to enforcing the 100 yards rule at the polling stations;
- Provisions should be made in the Representation of the People's Act to permit the Police and Fire Officers to vote in advance in an effort to provide adequate security and to effectively respond to emergencies on polling day. The provisions should also be extended to poll workers to allow greater efficiency and management of the polling stations and eliminating the 'transfer of votes' on polling day;
- The implementation of Poll Books in order to maintain a consistent record of the number of voters who have voted and to record other poll day activities;
- Prepare alpha lists for polling stations i.e. A – C, D – F, etc. to serve as a better guide for poll workers and the voting public;
- Voter education - There should be more emphasis on voter education emanating from the Electoral Office relating to the voting process. Some of the methods should include, but not limited to, town hall meetings, lectures and workshops in school at Secondary and tertiary levels and use of the print and electronic media in the dissemination of relevant information.

REFERENCES

1. CARICOM Election Observations Handbook, *November 2014*
2. Code of Conduct for St. Vincent and the Grenadines General Elections, *December 9th 2015*
3. Report of the CARICOM Election Observation Mission (CEOM) to the General Elections of the Republic of Suriname, *25th May, 2015*
4. Report of the CARICOM Election Observation Mission (CEOM) to the General Elections of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, *September 7th, 2015*
5. Report of the CARICOM Election Observation Mission (CEOM) to the General Elections of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, *Monday December 31st 2010*.
6. Searchlight Newspaper of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Vol. 21, *Friday December 11th, 2015*
7. Supervisor of Elections of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, *Report on the General Elections held in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Monday December 13th 2010*
8. The Vincentian Newspaper of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Vol. 109, No. 49, *Friday December 4th, 2015*
9. The Vincentian Newspaper of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Vol. 109, No. 50, *Friday December 11th, 2015*
10. www.caribbeanelections.com



ARRIVAL STATEMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM) ELECTION
OBSERVATION MISSION TO ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES
GENERAL ELECTIONS, 9 DECEMBER 2015

The Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines by way of letter dated 12 November 2015 invited CARICOM to deploy a mission to observe the General Elections which will be held in the country on 9 December 2015.

As a result an eight (8) member Group representing the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is now in St. Vincent and the Grenadines to observe the General Elections. The Group is headed by Mr. Gasper Jn. Baptiste, Chief Elections Officer of Saint Lucia. The other members of the Group include two members of staff from the CARICOM Secretariat and the following representatives from the CARICOM Member States:

Antigua and Barbuda – Ms. Karen ManWarren;

Barbados – Mr. Larry Smith;

The Bahamas – Mr. Sherlyn Hall;

Jamaica – Ms. Coydette Green; and

Trinidad and Tobago – Ms. Pamela Ogiste.

An advance Group including Mr. Jn. Baptiste along with the staff of the CARICOM Secretariat arrived in the country over the period 4 to 5 December 2015 with the others arriving on Sunday, 6 December.

Since arriving in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the advanced Group met with Ms. Sylvia Findlay-Scrubb, Supervisor of Elections, Ms. Wendy Bynoe, Public Relations Officer, St. Vincent Teachers Union, Mr. Noel Jackson, General Secretary of the National Workers Movement, Ms. Beverly Richards, President of the National Society of Persons

with Disabilities, representatives of St. Vincent and the Grenadines Public Service Union and Mr. Michael Charles, Commissioner of Police.

The Mission will meet with Senator Julian Francis, General Secretary of the Unity Labour Party (ULP), the Honourable Arnhim Eustace, and Leader of the Opposition, Mrs. Anesia Baptiste, Leader of the Democratic Republican Party and other Civil Society and Private Sector representatives ahead of Wednesday's polls.

On the day of Elections the Group will monitor activities including the Opening of the Poll, Voting, Close of Poll and Tallying of the ballots in 13 of the 15 constituencies.

The following day the Mission will issue a Preliminary Statement based on its observations to be followed later by a full report to H.E. Irwin LaRocque, Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community.

The CARICOM Election Observation Mission is happy for the opportunity to support and strengthen the democratic process in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and appreciates the high level of support and cooperation received since its arrival in the country.

GASPER JN. BAPTISTE
CHIEF OF MISSION
7 DECEMBER 2015

**CARICOM ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION TO
THE ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES ELECTIONS
9 DECEMBER 2015**

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

The eight (8) member CARICOM Election Observation Mission which at the invitation of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines monitored the December 9, 2015 Elections, visited (137) one hundred and thirty seven polling stations across (13) thirteen of the fifteen (15) established electoral districts. The Mission monitored the day's activities by observing the Opening of the Poll, the Voting Process, the Closing of the Poll and Counting of ballots.

Indications are that polling stations opened on time as voting started promptly at 7:00 a.m. in all the stations in which the opening was observed. All stations were fully staffed and most had at least two (2) agents present representing the two (2) major political parties. The polling stations for the most part were conveniently located and easily accessible to the electorate including the disabled. The Mission found that all of the supplies and materials needed were present in the required quantities.

Adequate security was in place at all locations with the Officers displaying a very professional approach which contributed to the level of calm which accompanied the day's activities. In the morning, the turnout of voters was steady, while a diminution was observed in the afternoon and the poll workers remained resolute and steadily carried out the required procedures ensuring that all electors who turned out were able to register their vote.

No major concerns were observed.

The Mission's assessment of the day's activities is that the voters were able to cast their ballots without intimidation or harassment and that the results of the Elections reflect the will of the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Mission wishes to congratulate the staff of the Electoral Office, the Poll Workers, the Political Parties and their Candidates, the Security Forces and the People of St. Vincent and the Grenadines for the mature way in which the Elections were conducted with no reported incidents of violence, and the high level of discipline displayed throughout the process.

The Mission will prepare a full report for submission to the Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), H.E. Ambassador Irwin LaRocque which will include recommendations and suggestions for strengthening the electoral process in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Again the CARICOM Election Observation Mission wishes to thank the Leaders of the Political Parties, Civil Society, the Media and the People of St. Vincent and the Grenadines for their warm welcome and cooperation which contributed to the success of the Mission.

*GASPER JN. BAPTISTE
CHIEF OF MISSION
CARICOM ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION
10 DECEMBER 2015*

SEARCHLIGHT

Local News

Friday, December 11, 2015. 3

ULP supporters take to streets to celebrate victory

AS SOON AS WORD hit the streets on Wednesday night that the Unity Labour Party (ULP) had, for the fourth consecutive term, won the general elections in St Vincent and the Grenadines, Kingstown and various constituencies in which the ULP had won were transformed into carnival scenes.

Just as they did in 2010, the ULP narrowly edged out the New Democratic Party 8-7 seats, with the ULP gaining substantial ground in terms of the popular vote — 52.5 per cent to the NDP's 47.5 per cent.

Supporters clad in party colours and waving flags and rags, honked their vehicle horns

and danced in the road in Kingstown chanting the party's slogan: 'Four Inna Row'.

At the ULP's headquarters at Richmond Hill, supporters partied behind a truck playing music before heading to Calliaqua where political leader Dr Ralph Gonsalves and his son, Camillo Gonsalves, the new representative for East St George, gathered to celebrate the party's victory.

As his vehicle approached the pedestrian crossing just outside Camillo Gonsalves' constituency office, the cheers and chants intensified as the elder Gonsalves waved at his supporters before making his way into

the office for an interview with reporters.

Camillo, who received 3124 votes to the NDP's Linton Lewis' 2521, hopped on to one of the party's trucks and with the use of a microphone, thanked the electorate for their support.

After alighting the truck, Gonsalves made his way through the thick crowd and was greeted with hugs.

Disc jockeys even went as far as mocking the NDP by playing their popular party song 'Get rid of them,' much to the delight of laughing ULP supporters.

In an interview with SEARCHLIGHT, party stalwart Sean Frederick could hardly muster



words to describe his party's victory.

"We know going into this election it was going to be tight and that it wasn't going to be a clean sweep.

"In terms of the turnout to rallies, we didn't look at crowds. We knew that on election day we had to mobilize and we organized in order for us to bring out the voters in order for us to be victorious today," Frederick said, adding that he is looking forward to the Government's implementation of promised projects and programmes.

Another supporter, Jennifer Caine, said she felt "really good" that the ULP was returned to office.

"I am happy that Ralph gone back in government. I didn't have no doubts at all because I know he going back there. We been want to give them 12," she

SUCCESSFUL Unity Labour Party candidate for West St George Cecil McKie (backing) gets a hug from constituent Nigel St Hillaire, while other supporters offer congratulations.

said. Kenlyn Clouden, another ULP supporter, said she felt overwhelmed by the party's victory and stated that she did not envisage it would have been so close.

"I think we would have get more than that. Everything that is going now, I just want to see he (Gonsalves) carry it forward — the airport, education revolution and so on," she said.

Celebrations continued long into the night, with supporters gathered on the playing field dancing and singing.



UNITY LABOUR PARTY SUPPORTERS on the streets Wednesday night, celebrating the party's fourth consecutive election victory.

10, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2015 THE VINCENTIAN

Politics

We won, says the NDP



Arnhim Eustace, Leader of the NDP, had not, up to press time Thursday, December 10, conceded defeat.

UP TO PRESS TIME, Thursday 10th December, the New Democratic Party (NDP) had not conceded defeat in the December 9, 2015 general election.

The unofficial count, released during the evening of election day, December 9, indicated that the Unity Labour Party had been returned to government, having won eight seats, to the NDP's seven.

However, in a statement posted on its Facebook page during the early hours of Thursday morning, the NDP said, "... the New Democratic Party are confident that we have won the general elections based on figures received by our various polling agents."



The claim is predicated on what the party says its figures show, i.e. that, "the NDP had won the Central Leeward seat by 6 votes, which means that we won the general elections by 8 seats to 7."

The unofficial count had given victory to Sir Louis Straker (2496 votes) of the ULP over the NDP's Ben Boker (2182 votes).

Further to the statement referred, Arnhim Eustace, Political Leader of the NDP, is reported to have said that six unsealed Ballot Boxes were found, and at last one Box was missing in the Central Leeward constituency.

That being its position, the NDP called for "... a full investigation into the late night activities in Central Leeward..."

The NDP statement went on to describe the ULP claim to victory as action that is "a brazen attempt by a dying regime to hold on to power against the wishes of the people."

In a later posting on its Facebook page, the NDP warned that "it is not over."



The posting said that the official count at that time was 7-7, with a recount for Central Leeward seat expected to be conducted at the Layout Police Station. The recount was in fact in process up to press time.

The NDP statement had urged supporters to make their way to Layout.

"We are asking everyone who believes that the Hon. Arnhim Eustace is the best leader this nation has to offer, that he has your best interests at heart, that he genuinely wants to see SVG move towards prosperity, and that we are ALL ONE PEOPLE, then make your way to Layout tomorrow (Thursday) morning BEFORE 8 am. And let's show what a mighty people we are, and that we will NOT give in to dictatorship!" the statement read.

Eustace himself made an appearance at the Layout Police Station during the count. Eye witnesses reported that he and Sir Louis Straker had a heated exchange of words which was punctuated by much finger-pointing between the two.

4 Friday, December 11, 2015.

Local News

SEARCHLIGHT

Tempers flare as NDP asks for Central Leeward recount

TEMPERS FLARED yesterday morning at the Layou police station, with veteran politician Sir Louis Straker and the leader of New Democratic Party's (NDP) Arnhim Eustace almost coming to blows.

The two elderly men squared off when Eustace turned up at the police station in the Central Leeward town for the recount of the ballots cast in that constituency in Wednesday's general election.

Following the preliminary count on Wednesday, Straker, a former deputy prime minister and the ULP's candidate for the Central Leeward constituency, was announced winner of the seat with 2,496 votes, compared with the NDP's Benjamin Exeter, who amassed 2,182 votes.

However, the NDP alleged irregularities and declared that it had information that Exeter had won the seat by six votes.

The NDP demanded a recount and called via radio and social media for supporters to gather at the Layou Police Station to give support.

SEARCHLIGHT arrived in Layou at about 9 a.m. and supporters were heard

chanting "We want justice", "Eustace, Eustace!", "Ralph Must Go," among other things.

When ULP candidate Sir Louis Straker arrived shortly after to witness the count, the large crowd booed as he entered the police station.

Eustace's arrival at the police station, however, sparked an outburst of screams and cheers by NDP supporters, which caused Straker, who was already inside the police station witnessing the recount, to come back out and ask Eustace to ask his supporters to move from the area.

"The people cannot do their work upstairs with this kind of bedlam down here," Straker exclaimed.

He was then asked by Eustace to call the police, which resulted in an aggressive exchange of words between the two, during which Straker stated, "Why you come back? You should take your loss like a big man!"

This sparked a stand-off between the two, during which they pointed aggressively in each other's faces.

The exchange was, however, intercepted by Eustace's bodyguard, who stood between the two.

allowing them to cool down.

The recount continued all day, during which supporters stood guard on the Layou waterfront, cheering and dancing in support of their party. (AS)



Caribupdate

LEADER OF THE New Democratic Party (NDP) Arnhim Eustace and Deputy Prime Minister Sir Louis Straker facing off at Layou Police Station. NDP candidate for Central Leeward Benjamin Exeter (background) Photo/Caribupdate

Statement from SVG Christian Council following post-election unrest

December 10, 2015

FELLOW VINCENTIANS, we have gone to the polls and exercised our democratic rights. We have expressed, by ballot, whom we want to form the government and to lead this country for the next five years.

If yesterday we defined ourselves by parties and colours, today we must divest ourselves of such attire and put on robes of state.

We therefore appeal to you to let wisdom, good sense and charity prevail in all that we say and do.

We, Leaders of the Christian Council, call for calm and the rule of law.

Together we must find the best way to ensure we preserve our

young democracy. In the midst of the many allegations that abound, let us remember that the only challenge to an election result is evidence that proves wrongdoing. Anyone with such evidence is obliged to report this to lawful authorities, International and Caribbean Observers and the NMCs.

We are one people, one Vincentian people under God, and it is together that we must forge ahead to build a nation on those enduring virtues and values which are commensurate with our dignity as human beings. Love, respect, unity, solidarity, the common good, moral integrity, tolerance, among others, are goods we should pro-

mote in all facets of life and living and in all our relationships and interactions. And at this time more than ever, we need to invoke those which would ennoble us and keep us in right relation with God and man.

Let us keep a still tongue, a calm heart and pray for good sense and justice to prevail. Remember it is not good enough for justice to be done, it must also be seen to be done.

We also ask that no partial result be handed to the Governor General. Let us be patient and wait till we are abundantly clear that we have a final result. Then let us all abide by the result and begin rebuilding unity in our nation.

**ELECTORAL OFFICE
BAY STREET
ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

WEST INDIES
TELEPHONE: (784) 457-1762/ (784) 485-6844/ (784)451-2287
EMAIL: electoraloffice@gov.vc

DATE: 11th December, 2015

TO: MEDIA

FROM: SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS

SUBJECT: FINAL COUNT OF VOTES

On Thursday December 10th 2015, Returning Officers in each of the fifteen constituencies conducted the **Final Counting of Votes** cast in the December 9th 2015 General Elections as mandated by the Representation of the People Act (1982) Chapter 9 Section 42.

Following the Final Count, the Supervisor of Elections can confirm the results in the fifteen constituencies as follows:

	Constituency	ULP	NDP	SVGP	DRP	Rejected	No. of Votes Cast
1	North Windward	2713	2390	5	15	7	5130
2	North Central Windward	3015	746	-	17	9	3787
3	South Central Windward	2476	1888	4	-	11	4379
4	South Windward	2507	1748	25	-	11	4291
5	Marriaqua	2643	1887	5	-	12	4547
6	East St. George	3135	2528	13	35	22	5733
7	West St. George	2682	2104	-	45	19	4850
8	East Kingstown	2295	2444	-	23	9	4771
9	Central Kingstown	2084	2600	11	-	18	4713
10	West Kingstown	2015	2459	14	-	20	4508
11	South Leeward	2620	2738	-	19	19	5396
12	Central Leeward	2497	2184	-	-	16	4697
13	North Leeward	2255	2267	-	-	15	4537
14	Northern Grenadines	601	1924	-	-	9	2534
15	Southern Grenadines	708	1120	-	-	5	1833
	Total	34,246	31,027	77	154	202	65,706

The under-mentioned candidates were therefore elected as Parliamentary Representatives:

<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Candidate</u>	<u>Political Party</u>
North Windward	Montgomery Daniel	ULP
North Central Windward	Ralph E Gonsalves	ULP
South Central Windward	Saboto Caesar	ULP
South Windward	Frederick Stephenson	ULP
Marriagua	St. Clair Prince	ULP
East St. George	Camillo Gonsalves	ULP
West St. George	Cecil McKie	ULP
East Kingstown	Arnhim Eustace	NDP
Central Kingstown	St. Claire Leacock	NDP
West Kingstown	Daniel Cummings	NDP
South Leeward	Nigel Stephenson	NDP
Central Leeward	Louis Straker	ULP
North Leeward	Roland Matthews	NDP
Northern Grenadines	Godwin Friday	NDP
Southern Grenadines	Terrance Ollivierre	NDP

His Excellency the Governor General has received the Certificate of Endorsement for each successful candidate in Wednesday's General Election.

The Electoral Office will publish a more detailed breakdown of the 2015 General Election Results on Tuesday 15th December on www.gov.vc as well as in the print media.

Persons who require further information can contact the Supervisor of Elections via telephone number (784) 457-1762 or (784) 485-6844 or (784) 451-2378 or electoraloffice@gov.vc

Sylvia Findlay
Supervisor of Elections