

THE
CARTER CENTER



GUYANA GENERAL ELECTION PRELIMINARY STATEMENT
MARCH 4, 2020

BACKGROUND

The March 2, 2020, election represents a significant moment for Guyana and the Guyanese people. The Carter Center commends the people of Guyana for their participation in the election and encourages all Guyanese to remain patient and peaceful as GECOM finalizes the results.

The discovery of oil in recent years has had an immense impact, challenging the resilience of democratic institutions while offering the potential for enormous democratic and economic advancement. Such a development has the potential to transform the country, though only if the flow of wealth from these resources is equitably distributed for the development of the country and its citizens.

The 2020 election arises from a no-confidence motion passed in Guyana's parliament on Dec. 21, 2018. The Carter Center visited Guyana several times in the year following the motion to assess the legal process and the status of preparations for elections.

The Carter Center deployed more than 40 observers and had teams in all of Guyana's 10 regions.

The electoral process is still ongoing, and tabulation is continuing. This statement is preliminary and does not cover final tabulation and results. A comprehensive report will be released in the months after the elections.

At this juncture, it is especially important that political parties and observers accompany GECOM's processes of tabulation. GECOM has made progress in tabulating results, but the process may still take some time to complete. Only GECOM has the authority to declare results. As the country awaits that declaration, the Center urges the key political leaders to act responsibly and in the interest of all Guyana's people, consistent with the spirit of the code of conduct signed by all parties.

ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Electoral system

A clearly defined electoral system that ensures compliance with international obligations and addresses important national issues is essential for credible elections. Guyana's electoral system is a complex system of proportional representation, where the seats for both the National Assembly and the regional democratic councils (RDCs) are allocated through the largest remainder method (using

the “Hare quota”). As a result, the election included a general ballot for the national election, and a regional ballot for the RDCs.

Of the 65 members of parliament, 40 are elected through a national “top-up” list, while the remaining 25 are elected through district lists in each of the country’s 10 regions. In order to contest the general election, a party has to present a national “top-up” list as well as at least six geographical lists. The president is elected from the same ballot used to fill the general election, as the head of the list.¹

The result of the electoral system is a complicated ballot, with parties on ballots in some regions and not others. Although nine political parties presented lists for the general election at the national level, only two parties (APNU+AFC and PPP/C) appeared on the general ballot in all 10 regions.²

The Guyanese electoral system is also unique in how it operates. It is neither a “closed list” system nor an “open list” system. The lists presented by parties have an order, but after the election, the party representative (head of list) has full discretion to select the candidates from that list to fill the seats won. As a result, voters do not know which candidates will be allocated seats.

The Carter Center urges Guyana’s political leaders to commit to reform the “winner-takes-all” election system currently in use. They should make critical issues of constitutional reform an urgent priority and commit to completing key reforms well before the next general election.

Legal Framework for Elections.

International law has created an extensive body of human rights norms, including commitments related to the conduct of genuine periodic elections by universal and equal suffrage. A coherent legal framework, within a legal system where there is respect for the rule of law, is a fundamental prerequisite for democratic elections.³ Universal and regional legal instruments impose obligations on Guyana to respect, protect, and fulfill the human rights standards for elections.

There is a wide range of universal legal obligations that have a bearing on the electoral process in Guyana. Guyana is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Guyana is also a party to the U.N. Convention against Corruption, but not to the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention.

Guyana is a member of the Organization of American States (OAS), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and the Commonwealth, and as a result is subject to the human rights commitments in the founding treaties of these regional organizations, while the non-treaty standards of all three organizations have persuasive effect on Guyana. One such example is the CARICOM Civil Society

¹ The president (who is the head of state) is elected by popular vote through a plurality (simple majority), yet this is done through the party-list system at the same time as the general election. The presidential candidates are designated as such by the party lists presented for the national “top-up” list. Voting for the parliamentary lists of a party constitutes a vote for that list’s presidential candidate. The president is thus not separately elected from the parliamentary representatives, and split votes are not possible. This system allows for the president to come from a party with a simple majority that doesn’t necessarily enjoy a parliamentary majority.

² Eleven parties presented lists, with nine contesting both general and regional elections and two parties contesting only the regional elections. The others presented lists for six to nine regions.

³ United Nations, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 2; Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art 2 1(3); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 25 (b).

Charter. Guyana has not signed or ratified the human rights instruments of the OAS, but it is a party to the Inter-American Convention against Corruption.

Guyana's legal framework for elections is founded in the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana 1980 and across a wide range of legislation, principally the Representation of the People Act, the National Registration Act, the Local Democratic Organs Act, the Election Laws (Amendment) Act, the National Assembly (Validity of Elections) Act, the National Assembly (Disqualification) Act, and the General Elections (Observers) Act, 1990. There are also numerous pieces of legislation amending most of the preceding statutes, in addition to subsidiary legislation in the form of regulations and orders.

The proliferation of legislation that deals with elections, combined with a number of amendments and weaknesses in recordkeeping, mean that understanding some electoral regulations requires compiling sections from across multiple pieces of amended legislation, some of which contain minor inconsistencies and errors. The Carter Center recommends consideration of consolidation of legislation related to elections.

The legal framework provides a good basis for the conduct of elections that is broadly in line with Guyana's regional and international obligations. Fundamental rights and freedoms are set out in the constitution, including freedoms of expression, assembly, and association, the right to vote, and the right to stand for election. There are particular provisions to deter the intrusion of ethnicity in electoral matters. There are, however, weak legal provisions regulating campaign finance that are not enforced. Because of the dualist nature of the legal system, the application of international treaty law may be restricted by the National Assembly.

Prisoners and the Right to Vote. While prisoners awaiting trial, and those convicted of all but election offenses, are not deprived of their right to vote by law, they are deprived of their voting rights in practice. There is a prison population of just over 1,900 people, of whom around one-third are awaiting trial. Delay has long been endemic to Guyana's judicial system, with cases taking many years to come to trial. While efforts to reduce delay are ongoing, pre-trial detention periods of up to five years remain common. There has been no initiative on the part of any of the authorities involved, principally the Ministry of Public Security and the Guyana Election Commission (GECOM), to ensure the voting rights of prisoners.

ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATION

A critical means to promote the transparency of an electoral process and facilitate the participation of citizens in the democratic process is an independent and impartial election management body. A transparent, accountable, and professional body is regarded as an effective means of ensuring that other international obligations related to the democratic process can be met.⁴ The election management body should ensure accountable, efficient, and effective public administration of elections and that the electoral process complies with Guyana's regional and international obligations for democratic elections and human rights.⁵

The Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) was established by the 1980 Constitution of Guyana and includes a board of commissioners and a secretariat. The board of commissioners has seven

⁴ U.N., (ICCPR) General Comment 25, para. 20: "An independent electoral authority should be established to supervise the electoral process and to ensure that it is conducted fairly, impartially and in accordance with established laws which are compatible with the Covenant." International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. (2006). *Electoral Management Design: The International IDEA Handbook*. Stockholm: International IDEA; Commonwealth Secretariat. (1997). *Good Commonwealth Electoral Practice: A Working Document*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

⁵ Venice Commission, Code, Section II.3.1.c.

members, including six commissioners (three appointed by each of Guyana's primary political parties) and a chairperson. Under the direction of a chief electoral officer (CEO), the secretariat is GECOM's executive and operational arm and supports the commissioners in operationalizing their mandate.

During the electoral process, the CEO nominates a returning officer (RO) for each of the 10 polling districts (corresponding to the country's 10 administrative regions). This officer is in charge of preparing and organizing the elections in the districts, basically becoming the CEO's representatives in the field. In particular, ROs are responsible for determining and declaring the total votes cast in favor of each list of candidates in the district by adding the votes recorded on the statements of poll. ROs are supported by deputy returning officers (DROs), one for approximately every 10 polling stations, as well as election clerks and clerical assistants.

Overall assessment of GECOM. GECOM utilized its strong base of electoral expertise to conduct well-managed voting-day operations. The voting and counting processes were generally well-prepared and logistically sound. The Carter Center commends GECOM's efforts on election day.

The method of appointment of GECOM commissioners was based on a recommendation President Carter made for the 1992 election that has come to be known as the "Carter Formula" and was later integrated into the constitution. According to that formula, three commissioners are to be appointed by the president, at his own discretion, and three appointed by the president on advice from the leader of the opposition. The chairperson is to be an independent person appointed by the president from a list of six candidates that are "not unacceptable" to the opposition. The leader of the opposition provides that candidate list after meaningful consultation with political parties represented in the National Assembly. In practice, the six members of the commission are representatives of the ruling party and the opposition party. This partisan structure has resulted in a highly polarized and sometimes ineffective board of commissioners – and excludes newer parties.

Guyana should consider adjusting the structure of the commission to enhance its independence, effectiveness, and professionalism, as The Carter Center has recommended in past elections.⁶

GECOM would benefit from taking steps to provide greater transparency. Its decision-making processes are carried out in closed-door meetings, and few decisions are publicly explained. This consistently inhibited the commission's credibility, unnecessarily reducing confidence in the process. In the future, GECOM should adopt a public relations plan to increase the transparency of the commission's work to all stakeholders.

VOTER EDUCATION

Voter education is an essential part of the electoral cycle and is recognized under international law as an important means of ensuring that an informed electorate is able to effectively exercise its right to vote without obstacles to ensure universal and equal suffrage.⁷ Elections require citizens to participate in the electoral process and to make an informed decision when voting. A well-informed electorate is essential to a genuinely democratic electoral process; it enhances the quality of the election and is an essential building block of a meaningful democracy. Voter information, awareness, and education campaigns provide voters with the knowledge, skills, and values to participate effectively.

⁶ As noted in the Carter Center's report on the 2001 elections, "As part of electoral reform efforts, Guyana should give careful consideration to alternative models, possibly reducing or eliminating political party representation and increasing the role of independent members of civil society and professional experts."

⁷ U.N. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 25(b); U.N. Human Rights Council, General Comment 25, "the Right to Participate in Public Affairs, Voting Rights, and the Right to Equal Access to Public Service," para. 11.

The term voter education has been used narrowly in Guyana, limited to informing voters of the basics of the elections and to clarifying some procedures ahead of election day. There is a clear need for more robust voter education efforts, not just as part of the preparations of future elections but also for the consolidation of democratic practices.

Various voter-information activities were conducted by GECOM close to election time in partnership with national and international organizations. Voter-information initiatives involved mass-media efforts using public service announcements in TV, radio, and print. Some efforts in voter awareness targeted youth and people with disabilities. Unfortunately, while very important, these came too late and were insufficient, particularly in rural areas and for less-educated voters. The Carter Center observed that GECOM's voter-education unit did not have a manager during the period leading up to the 2020 election and that all undertakings in voter information and awareness fell on a single member of the commission.

VOTER REGISTRATION

Ensuring universal suffrage and the enjoyment of the fundamental right to vote is essential to guarantee credible elections, and this, in turn, generally requires an efficient and credible electoral register that is complete, accurate, and up-to-date.⁸

The voter register has been a source of controversy throughout the election period. In the wake of the no-confidence motion, GECOM made the decision to launch a new house-to-house registration in order to build a new voter registry. The process was challenged in court, and the chief justice ruled that though house-to-house registration was not illegal, it was not appropriate under the circumstances. The chief justice also ruled that it would be unconstitutional to remove registered voters from the list without a death certificate, which was later appealed by the attorney general. Following the chief justice's ruling, the newly appointed GECOM chairperson decided to stop the registration after six weeks. This rendered the process of preparing a voter registry more complex than it has been in the past, as GECOM had to deal with two different sets of registration data: one from the existing list and the other from a truncated house-to-house registration exercise. GECOM's secretariat used all the measures given to it to correct the information in the list in order to ensure the register was accurate and up-to-date.

The Carter Center closely followed the development of the final voter register and steps by the secretariat to try to produce a voter register that was comprehensive, reliable, and accurate. Carter Center observations on election day suggest that GECOM's efforts to compile the list were successful, and we commend GECOM on this effort.

A total of 660,988 registered voters were on the final roll, an increase of 15.5 percent over 2015. The growth of registered voters from 2011 to 2015 was similar in absolute terms – approximately 90,000 voters. The number of registered voters seems disproportionate to Guyana's estimated population. The Carter Center recommends that before the next election the government reassess and overhaul both the process and the technology used to create and manage the voter registration database.

⁸ United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Art. 25(b); United Nations Human Rights Council, General Comment 25, para. 11.

CANDIDATES, PARTIES AND THE CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

The Campaign Period. The freedoms of opinion and expression, of association and assembly, are essential elements of political participation rights. These rights are protected when candidates and supporters are free to campaign without hindrance.⁹ The Carter Center observed that in the campaign, parties and candidates were able to freely exercise their fundamental rights of freedom of expression, association, and assembly.

Guyana has few laws regulating the formation of political parties and the conduct of campaigns; indeed, the law does not establish any defined campaign period. While most parties, in particular the two major parties, had started campaigning months before, all parties went into campaign mode immediately following Nomination Day.

Eleven parties were ultimately accredited by GECOM to contest these elections, though two of these parties, the Federal United Party and the Organization for the Victory of the People, were accredited to stand for only a single Regional Democratic Council (the former in Region 6 and the latter in Region 4). APNU+AFC and the PPP/C were the only parties accredited to run in all regions. The remaining seven parties were each accredited to run in six (LJP, TCI, TNM), seven (ANUG, Change Guyana, PRP), or nine (URP) regions.

Following the nomination of candidates, some GECOM commissioners alleged that three candidates were dual citizens and should be removed from the candidate list. These three candidates were asked to provide just cause as to why they should not be removed. The Carter Center is pleased that the matter was resolved equitably, although we note complaints that this affected the ability of the candidates in question to campaign on a level playing field.

Over the course of the campaign, Carter Center long-term observers attended 31 rallies and campaign events. These ranged in size from small gatherings of as few as 10 supporters to large rallies of perhaps 8,000 people. The Center did receive reports of low-level harassment and intimidation. There also were frequent reports of public posters and other party paraphernalia being torn down or otherwise destroyed. In its pre-election statement, The Carter Center noted with concern the use of language on the campaign trail that some allege was inflammatory. Nonetheless, all parties were able to travel freely throughout the country to present themselves to the people.

Notably, the unions of the University of Guyana convened a presidential debate on Feb. 13 featuring the candidates of six of Guyana's new parties. The Amerindian Peoples Association, along with the National Toshias Council, hosted another forum on Feb. 20 that included representatives of six parties, including APNU+AFC and the PPP/C. Although they didn't seem to get a lot of exposure, these were positive developments that should be encouraged and supported in the future.

Joinder. Shortly after qualifying to contest the elections, three parties – A New & United Guyana, the Liberty & Justice Party, and The New Movement – took advantage of a previously unused provision in Guyana's electoral laws allowing them to enter into a "joinder." Instead of becoming a formal coalition, the parties ran separately on the ballot but agreed that votes won by those parties in the general election were to be counted as if they had been cast in favor of a single list, thus increasing their chances of securing a seat in the National Assembly. On Feb. 12, the parties involved issued a memorandum of understanding they had negotiated among themselves that articulated the process by

⁹ U.N., ICCPR, Article 26. U.N. (CCPR), General Comment 25.

which their votes and seats would be allocated. Despite their agreement, the parties campaigned almost entirely separately.

Campaign Finance. Guyana's legal framework lacks legislation on party and campaign finance beyond ceilings for election expenditure and a simple requirement that declarations of electoral expenses must be submitted to GECOM after the election. The absence of campaign-finance law allows for great inequalities between political parties, as well as a lack of transparency about the sources and uses of campaign funding.

Use of State Resources. Throughout the campaign there were allegations that the ruling coalition misused state resources. These allegations often centered around the Regional Democratic Councils and the resources at their disposal.

Code of Conduct. On Friday, Feb. 28 – two days before polling – candidates and political party leaders signed a code of conduct prepared by GECOM. Although the code should have been presented earlier, it provided a welcome opportunity for candidates and political parties to recommit themselves to a peaceful election day and post-election period. GECOM's code of conduct came two weeks after all the parties signed a code of conduct developed by the Ethnic Relations Commission on Feb. 13.

MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

The Carter Center mission did not undertake systematic monitoring of the media. Nevertheless, the mission noted that coverage of the election in print and online media frequently seemed partisan, with many publications leaning toward one or the other major party. News reports often failed to provide comment from individuals subject to criticism in those same reports or to draw obvious parallels between the actions of one party or candidate and another. The media did seem able to report without fear, if not without political bias.

Political parties took as much advantage of the media as their financial resources allowed, purchasing advertising in print, radio, and TV. The Carter Center did not receive any reports of media outlets discriminating against parties in advertising fees or time. However, new political parties reported that their events were rarely covered by the National Communications Network (NCN) or other media.

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

Under international law, states must take all appropriate measures, including temporary special measures, to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life.

There are no gender quotas or other special temporary measures in place to foster greater political participation by women in Guyana. The constitution envisions an electoral system that includes women in parliament in numbers “reflective of their proportion among the electorate.” This has not been coherently translated into legislation, as the Representation of the People Act requires that political parties include women in their lists of nominees but does not require that the parties allocate any seats to women. Women held 22 of the 65 seats in the outgoing National Assembly, comprising just over one-third of the membership.

In 2020, three women ran for president, and several women were among the prime ministerial running mates. Women are underrepresented on GECOM, with only one of six commissioners, although the chairperson is a woman. Some senior-management posts at the GECOM secretariat are held by women, although there are few women returning officers. The vast majority of polling-day staff, including presiding officers, were women.

PARTICIPATION OF MINORITY GROUPS

Indigenous People. Indigenous communities have long been on the margins of Guyanese society, both geographically and politically. In the past, indigenous representatives have reported difficulties in registering to vote, restricting the opportunity of people in these communities to have a voice in the electoral process. Administrative reforms do seem to have eased barriers to registration, and though precise figures are not available, indigenous representatives report that a steadily increasing share of voters in their communities are registered. The parties have recognized indigenous people as potential swing voters and campaigned vigorously in some indigenous regions (Region 9 in particular). The Amerindian Peoples Association and the National Toshias Council organized a “nonpartisan candidate forum” featuring candidates from both the historically dominant parties and several new parties, and pressed them to take positions on indigenous issues. Although preliminary election results may suggest increased participation in indigenous areas, and this increased engagement is encouraging, Guyana still has some distance to go to ensure its politics include all its citizens.

The Amerindian Act 2006 protects the collective rights of indigenous villages and communities and creates representative bodies, including village and community councils and a National Toshias Council. These structures have become political party fora rather than representatives of indigenous interests. Legislative reform is required in order to foster a stronger voice for indigenous peoples within the political arena.

People with Disabilities. Despite some progress to facilitate voting for persons with disabilities, there were no special measures in the 2020 election. The National Commission on Disabilities engaged with GECOM to facilitate greater access to, and independence in, voting, but with no visible results. The use of tactile ballot guides (“stencils”) for the vision-impaired in 2015 was not very successful, mostly because of a lack of information and awareness. They were not used at all for the 2020 election, and GECOM also declined to use curbside voting. A brochure was produced to make polling staff aware of positive ways to deal with persons with disabilities in the polling stations.

LGBTI. The rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) community were endorsed by some new parties but not by Guyana’s two major political parties. A history of discrimination and restrictive legislation in Guyana has limited the role of the LGBTI community in public life, including their participation in elections as candidates, political party officials, and election workers. Homosexuality is a criminal offense in Guyana, and The Carter Center recommends that discriminatory legislation be repealed.

Youth. Efforts to involve young voters seemed to recede during this election. Several new parties, particularly LJP, TCI, and TNM, focused their campaigns on mobilizing young voters, but despite making extensive use of the internet and social media were not able to overcome historically entrenched voting patterns. The Guyana National Youth Council, with vital support from the International Republican Institute, mounted a voter-education campaign, but its reach was restricted by limited resources.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND DOMESTIC OBSERVATION

In the preelection period, Carter Center long-term observers noted a very limited presence of organized civil society organizations in the regions.

Although some organizations accredited Guyanese domestic observers, no civil society organization conducted a nationwide nonpartisan citizen observation effort, something that has become a welcome good practice in other countries around the world. Most organizations conducting domestic citizen observation were partisan. Youth Change Guyana, with support from the U.S.-based International Republican Institute, deployed close to 50 observers on election day across five regions and represented the most independent of the local observers. Some business and professional organizations, such as the Private Sector Commission (PSC), American Chamber of Commerce, and The Bar Association of Guyana, pooled their resources to train and deploy accredited local observers.

ELECTORAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy rendered by a competent national tribunal for acts that violate his or her rights or freedoms.¹⁰ Individuals have the right, under international law, to a remedy for violation of their participatory rights in elections.¹¹ The credibility of the electoral process is determined to a large degree by the capacity to effectively resolve electoral disputes. Challenges to election results, or to the conduct of elections, should not be considered a weakness of the electoral system but a sign of its resilience.¹²

The 2020 election was characterized by numerous legal complaints and judicial decisions related to the passage of the no-confidence motion, the voter list, the appointment of the GECOM chairperson, and candidate eligibility. Although some stakeholders have expressed a lack of confidence in judicial neutrality, it is commendable that political parties and citizens have demonstrated a commitment to taking issues to the courts and abiding by the courts' rulings.

VOTING

Advanced Voting. The Carter Center observed voting for disciplined on Feb. 21, 2020. Polling took place at 68 “ballot stations” across the country, located in military and police bases, as well as in prisons. Diplomats abroad and their families were also allowed to utilize advanced voting. Carter Center observers noted that the polling process was well-conducted in ballot stations observed and that political party scrutineers were present and professional, providing a welcome level of transparency to the process.

GECOM's secretariat had previously extracted the 10,226 ballots for use by disciplined service ranks and put them into individual envelopes. These were sorted on Feb. 22 and dispatched with other GECOM materials so that they could be “intermixed” on election day with ballots in their respective polling districts. On March 2, Carter Center observers observed the “intermixing” of disciplined services ballots in three of the polling stations they observed.

Election day preparations. Generally, preparations for polling day went smoothly and were carried out on schedule. In some stations, ballot papers were calculated on the basis of the total number of registered voters for that station, without taking into account those from the disciplined forces who had already voted, but those issues were resolved.

¹⁰ United Nations, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966, Article 2.3.

¹¹ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2002, International Electoral Standards: Guidelines for Reviewing the Legal Framework of Elections, p. 94.

¹² The Carter Center. Election Obligations and Standards: A Carter Center Assessment Manual, 2014, p. 178 .

In the pre-election period, some questioned the reduction of polling places in private residences, which the opposition felt was implemented in a discriminatory manner. The matter was solved to the satisfaction of both major parties, but only days before polling was to take place. Some stakeholders linked this issue to Carter Center reporting and recommendations from 2015. The Center noted in a 2015 report that because of the lack of government-owned buildings in some areas, 166 polling stations were located in private buildings and residences. While this did not seem to negatively influence public confidence in the electoral process, The Carter Center suggested that GECOM ensure that citizens could cast their ballots in a neutral environment. The debate around the polling-station issue contributed to delays in finalizing the list of polling stations for the 2020 elections.

The Carter Center stands by its recommendation that polling should be held in neutral locations but recognizes that in some cases polling may need to be held in privately owned buildings. However, decisions about polling locations should be made well in advance of election day.

In advance of the 2020 election, The Carter Center observed the training of poll workers in several locations across the country, and in all cases assessed the training positively.

Election Day. On election day, the Carter Center deployed 41 observers who conducted 220 observations in polling stations across the 10 regions of the country.

Polling stations opened on time at 100 percent of locations observed by The Carter Center. Poll workers across the country appeared very knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities and performed their duties with integrity and professionalism. Carter Center observers assessed procedures during the polling process positively at almost all stations observed (98.7 percent). Voters had a strong understanding of the voting process.

The police provided security at polling stations across the country and performed their responsibilities professionally in most cases.

Women made up 78 percent of presiding officers in polling stations observed by The Carter Center, and 85 percent of staff in polling stations observed.

Observers positively assessed voting procedures, including the identification of voters, the stamping of ballot papers, and voter instruction. In the majority of polling stations observed by The Carter Center, procedures for checking for ink, as well as the inking of fingers, were assessed positively, although in three polling stations, observers noted inadequacies.

In some areas, particularly Region 4, The Carter Center observed the presence of campaigning and campaign materials within 200 yards of polling stations, which violates law. In addition, Carter Center observers noted the presence of information desks operated by the two major political parties in regions 4, 7, 9, and 10, particularly in Georgetown. The help desks were equipped with tents, tables, and laptops in most cases, and party supporters were assisting voters in identifying their polling station as well as keeping records of voters. The Carter Center heard some complaints in Georgetown that the presence of these tents within 200 yards of the polling stations may have been intimidating to some.

Political Party Scrutineers. Political party scrutineers were observed at all polling stations visited by The Carter Center, providing an important level of transparency to the process. APNU+AFC and PPP/C scrutineers were observed in large numbers. In polling stations observed by The Carter Center, 84 percent of APNU+AFC scrutineers and 68 percent of PPP/C scrutineers were women. The

performance of political party scrutineers was assessed positively in 95 percent of polling stations observed.

Closing and Counting. Carter Center observers assessed the closing process as positive in 93 percent of the 15 stations observed. Observers reported that the procedures for accounting for ballot papers was poor or inadequate in two of the 15 stations where Carter Center observed.

Carter Center observers witnessed the count in 15 polling stations and assessed the process as very good or reasonable in all stations. Although polling staff seemed very well-trained on polling procedures, Carter Center observers reported that they were less confident in the application of counting procedures.

Tabulation. The tabulation of results is an integral phase of the electoral process that ensures that the will of the voters is accurately and comprehensively reflected in the final results.¹³ After voting, Carter Center observers were present to observe the tabulation process in each of the regions.

In Georgetown, The Carter Center has had a 24-hour presence at both the regional tally for Region 4 and the process conducted by the CEO in Georgetown. At the time of issuing this statement, the tabulation of results was ongoing, and thus The Carter Center cannot provide any assessment.

About the Mission

The Carter Center conducts its election observation missions in accordance with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers that was adopted at the United Nations in 2005 and has been endorsed by more than 50 election observation groups. The mission assesses the electoral process based on Guyana's national legislation and its obligations for democratic elections under both regional and international agreements.

¹³ ICCPR General Comment 25; U.N. General Assembly Resolution A/Res/55/96 Article 1(d), iv.