

**Interim Statement of the Commonwealth Observer Group  
on the General Election held on 6 December, 2022,  
in the Commonwealth of Dominica**

**by**

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The Commonwealth Observer Group has been present in Dominica since 1 December 2022, at the invitation of the Government of Dominica, with an advance team having arrived on 28 November to finalise preparations.

The Group has been briefed by a wide range of stakeholders, including the President, the Prime Minister, the Electoral Commission and the Electoral Office of Dominica, the Chief of Police, representatives of opposition political parties, independent candidates, representatives of the press, as well as a broad range of political and civil society representatives.

These briefings were essential in the Group's preparations for deployment on election day, 6 December 2022.

**Key findings**

**A. Pre-Election Environment**

The General Elections in Dominica were snap elections, announced on 6 November 2022. While wholly consistent with the Constitution, the announcement created certain challenges for some stakeholders. The opposition parties took the decision to boycott the elections, due to alleged lack of progress on electoral reform.

Narratives on electoral reform dominated the discourse in the lead up to the election. The Group was pleased to note that the atmosphere in the run-up to polling day was overall peaceful. It was also pleased to see a very vibrant electorate, keen to discuss and engage with issues.

**B. The Electoral Framework and Electoral Administration**

The legal framework provides the basic conditions for a credible and competitive election. The 2022 General Elections were generally conducted in accordance with Dominica's legal framework.

The Group is aware of the concerns expressed about the process of drawing up the Voters' List used at this election. Based on our observations, the Group is not in a position to give an opinion on this issue.

The Group enquired of Returning and Presiding Officers about difficulties encountered in identifying voters, and no such difficulties were expressed in the polling stations observed. It can also report that no challenge to voter identity was observed.

There was a high level of attention focused on the Dominica Electoral Commission. The effective functioning of the Electoral Commission should be a priority in the broader electoral reform agenda.

The Dominica Electoral Office and its staff generally performed well in conducting polling and counting of votes, in accordance with the provisions of the law. The Group is satisfied that the Electoral Office was granted the resources it required to swiftly prepare for these elections. The Group commends the Dominica Electoral Office on its performance.

### **C. Electoral Reform**

The Group notes that there is no requirement for voters to prove their identity using an ID card, or other form of photographic identification, as is the case in many Commonwealth countries. The Group also notes that the procedures for checking the eligibility of citizens living abroad were the subject of intense debate.

The observations of the Group are that voters who turned out were able to identify themselves satisfactorily to electoral officials and exercise their franchise. Nevertheless, the Group considers that there is room for improvement in this regard.

### **D. The Campaign**

Though the Group was unable to observe the full campaign period, it noted that political rallies were peaceful, colourful in nature and very well attended.

Considering that opposition parties boycotted the elections, independent candidates did not experience any apparent inhibitions or limitations to their campaigning, using the main media outlets to convey their message.

### **E. Participation and Inclusion**

The Group lauds the large numbers of female candidates. Furthermore, the level of engagement by women in administering the electoral process and assisting voters was notable and laudable.

The Group heard from those it met that there is a need to rebuild youth confidence in democratic electoral institutions and processes. At this early stage, the Group is not able to access a disaggregation of voters by age and gender, however the observations lead to a conclusion that voters of all ages and from all walks of life were able and keen to cast their ballot.

Given the snap elections, the Electoral Office generally did well on voter education. However, there is a need to have continuous voter education that takes into account the diversity of Dominicans and that uses all the available technology.

## **F. Election Day**

The Group reported:

- A peaceful and generally well-managed process
- Voters were free to exercise their franchise
- Voters turned out early and in an orderly fashion
- The observed polling stations opened on time, with polling staff, election materials, police officers, and candidates' agents were present
- The secrecy of the ballot was provided for and polling stations were laid out as per instructions from the Electoral Office
- Commendable efforts to make polling stations accessible. However, in some cases, better provisions could have been made for access by persons with physical disabilities
- A visible, unobtrusive, and reassuring police presence during both polling and counting
- Voters requiring assistance, including pregnant women, the elderly, those with disabilities were given preferential treatment at the polling stations
- Voters easily found their names on the voters' lists and were able to vote
- Polling stations observed closed promptly at 17.00hrs
- The count observed were transparent, with election officials conducting the process in a deliberate and careful manner, following the prescribed procedures.
- The tallying process followed stipulated procedures

## **Conclusion**

It is the Group's considered view that the results reflect the collective will of the people who voted and that the election of 6 December 2022 was conducted in accordance with the laws of Dominica.

The Group commends and congratulates all Dominicans who participated peacefully in an important civic exercise. The Group also congratulates the election authorities and polling staff, the political parties, candidates, the police, and candidates' agents for their respective roles in ensuring the success of the electoral process.

The Group was particularly impressed by the large number of women and youth who participated in the electoral process, not only as candidates and voters but also as polling staff, party agents, and witnesses/observers.

It is the Group's hope and expectation that the peaceful atmosphere that characterized Election Day will prevail. All Dominicans, especially political parties, candidates, and their supporters, are encouraged to continue to show magnanimity and to uphold their commitments to peace, in a spirit of national unity and solidarity. The Group urges that any disputes be addressed through the available legal mechanisms.

The Group's final report will be prepared and submitted to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, who will forward it to the Government of Dominica, the Electoral Commission, the leaders of political parties, and thereafter to all Governments of the Commonwealth. It will also be made available to the public.

The Group wishes to express its appreciation to the people, Government and authorities of Dominica for the cooperation and kind assistance received throughout the Group's mission.

*Roseau, Commonwealth of Dominica*

*7 December 2022*