



CPA BIMR

Election Observation Mission to Montserrat

OCTOBER 2024



PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

"It has been a privilege to observe Montserrat's general elections take place in a peaceful, competitive and transparent manner. We witnessed many individuals go 'above and beyond' in their public service to their country, ensuring election day went smoothly. This election saw the successful introduction of a mobile polling station and an increase in voter turnout. We trust this statement, and our forthcoming report, play a part in supporting Montserrat's precious democracy."

Hon. Shellya Rogers-Webster MHA (Anguilla), Head of Mission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the early hours of Friday 25 October the CPA BIMR Mission observed the final votes counted and the results published of the Montserrat general elections. Within twelve hours, that Mission saw the new government and leader of the opposition sworn into office in a smooth, peaceful and efficient transfer of power.

Overall Election Day was efficiently administered, the election results were accepted by all stakeholders, there were no requests for a recount and there have been no legal challenges to date. The Mission commends the many individuals whose public service and hard work enabled this successful exercise of democracy, both in the preparation and the execution of election day. The election was transparent, fair and reflects the will of the Montserratians who went to the polls that day.

Many procedures were followed conscientiously although there were also areas where further attention and training would be beneficial to ensure a consistent application of procedure throughout the electoral process.

The increased turnout in this election, rising by five per cent, and the high number of candidates, demonstrates a high-level of civic engagement in politics in Montserrat and the resilience of society which thrives on the island. This election was notable for the introduction of a new mobile polling station which enabled persons to exercise their franchise in a more accessible and dignified manner.

The mobile polling team visited the prison, a care home and the hospital. The electoral officials, the prison, the care home, the hospital, the police and the defence force should be commended on this successful innovation.

Notwithstanding the successful execution of the election, and these further beneficial developments, they were delivered against a backdrop of complex legal, constitutional and regulatory frameworks. A comprehensive review of electoral processes and the legal frameworks within which they operate may prove prudent and enhance future elections. This could review issues such as; the voter registration process, candidate eligibility, the regulation of election campaigns, political party registration, and rules on campaign finance, amongst other things.

On Election Day the Mission observed the opening of polling stations, voting throughout the day, the closing of polls and the count. The Mission observed all 13 polling stations, including the 12 polling stations across the island's six divisions, and the mobile polling station in all three of its locations.

In addition to this statement, within two months of election day our Mission will produce a longer Final Report with recommendations which the Mission believes will enhance future elections.

INTRODUCTION TO THE MISSION

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association British Islands and Mediterranean Region (CPA BIMR) conducted an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to the Montserrat general elections on 24 October 2024. This is the third time CPA BIMR has observed general elections in Montserrat, with previous Missions in 2014 and 2019. This Mission was present in Montserrat from 16 October to 26 October 2024.

The mission was composed of seven observers, including three Commonwealth parliamentarians. The composition of the mission was as follows:

- Head of Mission: Hon Shellya Rogers-Webster MHA (Anguilla)
- Deputy Head of Mission: Jamie Greene MSP (Scotland)
- Short-Term Observer: Steve Aiken MLA (Northern Ireland)
- Election Analyst: Merce Castells (Spain)
- Election Analyst: Armin Rabitsch (Austria)
- Election Co-ordinator: Martin Vickery (UK)
- Election Administrator: Nicky Davis (UK)



The CPA BIMR Election Observation Mission.

CPA BIMR was invited to facilitate an election observation mission by the Governor, in her capacity as the Head of State's representative on Montserrat. This Mission was supported by the Government and Opposition; all three political parties engaged with the Mission, as well as a number of independent candidates.

The Mission conducted an independent assessment of the Montserrat general elections against international legal standards, commitments and obligations, as well as domestic laws. Its assessment considered the legal framework, election administration, the political campaign, the media, and opportunities for complaints and appeals. In addition, the Mission considered a number of wider issues such as gender equality and participation of persons with disabilities.

The Mission arrived in Montserrat eight days before election day and met a wide range of key stakeholders in Montserrat. These included candidates, the Electoral Commission, members of the judiciary, the Attorney General, the Registering Officer, a wide range of civil society groups, young people in a college, those advocating for persons with disabilities, election officials and the media. The Mission observed a number of rallies and motorcades from the three political parties in a range of locations in Montserrat.

On Election Day, the Mission visited the 12 polling stations across the six divisions of the island, plus it observed the mobile polling station in all three of its locations. The Mission was present at the count from the arrival of the ballot boxes to the publishing of the election results.

The Mission is independent in its composition, findings and conclusions, adhering to the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers signed at the United Nations in 2005. It will continue to follow post-election developments and will publish a final report, containing recommendations, within two months of election day.

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The island of Montserrat is a British Overseas Territory located in the eastern Caribbean, just 27 miles off the coast of Antigua. It is an internally self-governing territory with executive power invested in the British Crown through an appointed Governor. The Governor chairs the Cabinet, which has general control of the direction of government. The Cabinet includes the Premier and three ministers, all of whom are elected members of the Legislative Assembly. The Legislative Assembly consists of nine elected representatives. The Governor retains key responsibilities in areas such as security, external affairs, defence, public service, and offshore finance. The Premier is appointed by the Governor from among the elected members and must have the support of a majority in the Assembly. The Attorney General and Financial Secretary also participate in the Legislative Assembly and in the Cabinet as ex officio members. Montserrat has strong regional links within and around the Caribbean. It is a full member of CARICOM and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). It also has strong relations in the Americas and the Commonwealth.

The Soufrière Hills volcanic eruptions in Montserrat from 1996 to 2010, along with a number of hurricanes, have had a devastating impact on the island. These events forced many residents to leave their homes, leading to a significant drop in population and changes in community dynamics. Only roughly one third of the island is habitable now. Before the eruptions, Montserrat had over 11,300 inhabitants, this number has now reduced to around 4,000. Key challenges the island faces include access to the island, including the reinstatement of a ferry and an airport that can receive larger aircrafts, depopulation, especially of qualified individuals, and limited economic development.

Elections are held every five years. Montserrat's political landscape features several parties that do not adhere strictly to defined ideologies. There is no registry of political parties nor regulations on their establishment and functioning, politics rely on personalities. In the elections held in November 2019, Movement for Change and Prosperity (MCAP) won five seats, the People's Democratic Movement (PDM) won three seats and one seat was secured by an independent. In this election, three political parties are competing: MCAP, led by Dr. Samuel Joseph, who served as Deputy Premier and Minister of Communication, Works, Energy, and Labour, PDM led by opposition leader Paul Lewis including Donaldson Romeo, former Premier, and United Alliance, a newly established party, led by Reuben T. Meade, who served as the Premier of Montserrat from 2010 to 2014 and Chief Minister (1991-1996 & 2009-2010).

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The legal framework for the 2024 general elections provides a good basis for the conduct of democratic elections, in line with international standards and the commitments extended to Montserrat.¹ It primarily comprises the Montserrat Constitution Order, 2010, the Elections Act, 1952 (last amended 2024) and the Electoral Commission Act, 2012, and is supplemented by regulations and guidelines issued by the Electoral Commission.

Fundamental rights and the freedoms of association, assembly, movement, and expression are enshrined in the Constitution. The Elections Act covers key aspects of the electoral process, including the registration of voters and candidates, the campaign, election day procedures, complaints and appeal mechanisms, election offences and their corresponding sanctions, and election administration.

The Elections Act has been amended 20 times since it was first adopted. Since the 2019 elections, two sets of amendments have been enacted, in July 2023 and in April 2024. Positive efforts were made to address some of the recommendations offered by the previous CPA BIMR Mission in 2019, including new provisions in the Elections Act that provide for a mobile polling station and the separation of the roles of the Electoral Commission Chairperson and the Supervisor of Elections. Other amendments provide for the position of assistant returning officers and changes to the candidate registration fee, increasing it to \$1,000 XCD and stipulating that it is no longer refundable.

Despite these improvements, several legal deficiencies still persist. Provisions concerning suffrage rights, voter and candidate registration, campaign regulations, campaign finance rules, the secrecy of the vote, media involvement, and both citizen and international observation do not fully align with international commitments for democratic elections. Additionally, inconsistencies and ambiguities regarding terms such as "ballot," "vote," "domicile," and "resident" require further clarification in the legislation. Furthermore, the absence of a consolidated legal text undermines the principles of accessibility and legislative clarity.

The Electoral Commission has updated the regulatory framework by reissuing an elections manual, a handbook for electoral staff, and a booklet on election offences in 2024. On 18 October 2024, new guidelines for the media were also released. However, there was no consultation with media outlets regarding this new guidance and it is yet to be published on the Electoral Commission's website.

ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND BOUNDARY DELIMITATION

Montserrat uses a single multi-member constituency *bloc voting system*, known by voters as voting at large. There is a provision for a run-off election for those candidates who have not met a threshold of six per cent of total votes cast. Voters can choose up to nine candidates from those standing for either a political party or as independent candidates. The electoral system is well understood by parties, candidates and voters. Some candidates have been advocating a return to the electoral system Montserrat had in place prior to the volcanic eruptions. Before 2001, the island had seven electoral constituencies. However, after volcanic eruptions that made about two-

¹ These include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Other relevant treaties which have yet to be extended include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention against Corruption, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

thirds of Montserrat uninhabitable, the electoral system was reformed. Future electoral reform continues to be a topic of debate.

For electoral purposes, the island is divided into six electoral divisions that do not correspond with administrative boundaries. There are a total of 13 polling stations, two for each of the six electoral divisions, and for the first time, a mobile polling station that serves voters registered in the prison, an elderly care home, and the hospital.

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The Constitution establishes an Electoral Commission with four members. The current Commission was appointed by the Governor in May 2023 for a five-year period. The Governor appoints the Chairperson while legally one member is appointed on the advice of the premier, one on the advice of the leader of the opposition, and one member representing the public interest, following consultation with civil society representatives. While there is a vibrant civil society in the country these consultations were reportedly not conducted. The newly appointed Commissioners viewed their role as an act of public service to the community, and they had not applied for the positions.

An electoral amendment passed in 2023 provides for the appointment of a Supervisor of Elections by the Governor, on the recommendation of the Electoral Commission. This was prompted by a recommendation in the Final Report by the CPA BIMR Election Mission in 2019. However, in practice this meant that the Chairperson of the Commission became the Supervisor of Elections, and the Electoral Commission was reduced to three Commissioners, with one vacant position left unfilled. There was no opportunity for a handover from the previous Electoral Commission to this new one appointed in May 2023, though its 2019 Election Report provided some guidance. The new Commissioners had very little time for improvements ahead of these 2024 general elections, but worked together as an impressive and committed team, preparing for and conducting these elections under a tight schedule.

The Governor appoints the Returning Officer on the recommendation of the Supervisor of Elections. The Governor may also at any time revoke this appointment, which does jeopardise the independence of the Electoral Commission in this matter. Assistant Returning Officers conduct the count of ballot boxes under the supervision of the Returning Officer.

THE RIGHT TO VOTE

Section 12 of the Elections Act states the eligibility criteria for one to have the right to vote in Montserrat. Persons must be at least 18 years old, of sound mind, and either a Montserratian or a Commonwealth citizen who has resided in Montserrat for at least 36 months prior to registration, or is domiciled in Montserrat and is resident at the date of registration. Domiciled students studying abroad can be registered even if they are not residents at the date of registration. Those serving a prison sentence of over 12 months are disqualified from voting.

There is no legal definition of domiciled and resident, despite previous recommendations by past CPA BIMR Missions. Both terms are differently understood by the interlocutors who met with the Mission and the matter remains contentious.

VOTER REGISTRATION

The latest population census in 2023 reported a total population of 4,386 persons including non-national residents. The same year the Registering Officer, appointed by the Supervisor of Elections, conducted the regular five-yearly enumeration exercise to review all the entries of the existing voter register and create a new voter register. During the door-to-door registration of voters the enumeration teams had the right to enter any premises during the hours of daylight to make inquiries for obtaining information for a person who is qualified to be registered as a voter. Reportedly a number of people refused to be registered due to a sense of frustration at the political situation, but no data about the number of non-registered eligible voters exists. The Registering Officer collaborated with the Montserrat Social Security Department, the Immigration Department, and some members of the community to verify entries, as some persons had migrated or were deceased. The enumeration exercise was, however, not publicly announced due to the late appointment of the Electoral Commission. The exercise also faced challenges with a tight time schedule and there is no electronic database of births and deaths that can assist with this process.

In September 2024 a continuous voter registration process took place, resulting in the final voter list of 3,464 registered voters. This represents a decline of ten per cent from the 3,858 registered voters in the 2019 elections. The voter register has newly been made accessible online and it includes one's name, profession and area of residence, but not one's detailed address, gender, date of birth, or whether they have a disability. Those individuals who were deregistered did not receive any official notification that this had taken place.

According to reports, the Registering Officer and those involved in this process showed a conscientious and committed approach to ensuring this list was as accurate as possible. However, this process of manually re-registering voters every five years is a resource-heavy approach to maintaining a list and is vulnerable to human error.

THE RIGHT TO STAND FOR ELECTION

The Constitution extends the right to stand for election to Montserratian nationals by birth who are at least 21 years old. A candidate must also be a registered voter in Montserrat and have resided on the island for at least twelve months during the preceding five years. While the emphasis on residency and citizenship reflects the island's commitment to ensuring that elected representatives are closely connected to the community they serve, the requirements for standing for office are overly restrictive. The distinction between natural-born citizens and those who are naturalised does not align with international standards.

Furthermore, the Constitution outlines several disqualifications for standing for election. Individuals with certain criminal convictions or who have been bankrupt are disqualified from running. Holders of public office are also prohibited from becoming candidates, and civil servants wishing to run must resign from their positions. There are currently 974 civil servants, constituting about 60 per cent of the workforce in Montserrat. While this rule aims to maintain the neutrality of the public service, there is a general consensus among Mission interlocutors that it should be reviewed, as depopulation and retaining qualified individuals on the island are significant concerns.

Individuals who hold dual citizenship are disqualified unless they renounce their second citizenship within ten days after nomination. This double citizenship requirement is not applied consistently; there have been at least two candidates who held two passports.

CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

A total of 34 candidates competed, of them 15 were women. Eight candidates were seeking re-election. The three political parties competing had a full slate of nine candidates each, and seven candidates ran as independents. This pool of those standing reflects a competitive political landscape, as voters were offered a large choice of candidates.

To be nominated as a candidate, one must be nominated by two registered voters. Candidates were required to pay a non-refundable fee of \$1,000 XCD and to submit their application before the Returning Officer. The registration process took place on 10 October 2024, a day known as nomination day.

Nomination papers for all 34 candidates who applied were accepted and no challenge was made against any candidature by any other candidate or voter.

On 13 October, the Returning Officer disqualified a candidate from United Alliance, for not meeting the 12-month residency requirement.² They appealed this decision to the High Court, which upheld the Returning Officer's ruling and barred them from competing. They then took their case to the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, which overturned the High Court judgment on 21 October. It ruled that the Returning Officer had overstepped her authority in invalidating the nomination without formal objections from other candidates.

This indicates a legal loophole that needs to be addressed through legislative changes to ensure that there are mechanisms in place so that candidates meet the necessary legal requirements to run for office. The Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court did not rule on whether or not eligibility criteria was met. The candidate participated in the election and ballots were reprinted with their name on. This case highlighted important issues related to electoral processes and candidate eligibility in Montserrat, which are widely debated among the public.

ELECTION CAMPAIGN

There are no campaign regulations provided for in legislation and a code of conduct for candidates was not in place. The three parties and seven independent candidates mostly campaigned via door-to-door canvassing, on the radio, with campaign posters, conducting motorcades, and holding campaign rallies in the different divisions of the island. Without an agreed campaign schedule, parties had to notify the police of planned rallies on a first-come-first-served basis. In instances when the plans of parties overlapped, the police encouraged parties to negotiate to agree on a coordinated schedule.

The campaign focused primarily on access to and from the island via ferry or bigger planes, the rising cost of living, and greater financial independence. Parties provided their manifestos and paid for time on the radio to explain their plans to the electorate in more detail. The freedoms of

² According to immigration records checked by the Returning Officer they had spent 94 days in Montserrat in the past five years.

expression and assembly were respected but the limited media of Montserrat, including a lack of independent journalism, curtailed public debate. No public debate of party leaders took place. Such a debate could have provided the electorate with a clearer understanding of the differences between the plans of the political parties.

Some Mission interlocutors criticised misogynistic and sometimes malicious remarks, particularly toward female candidates. However, these comments went unpunished, suggesting a need for stronger regulation and oversight of the digital space to ensure that victims do not bear the burden of seeking justice in court.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Political parties and independent candidates in Montserrat are not subject to any regulations concerning political or campaign finance. As a result, both parties and candidates are free to accept unlimited donations and spend money on their campaigns without any restrictions or transparency. There are no legal obligations to disclose funding sources or campaign expenditures. Additionally, the law does not address potentially controversial matters, such as the acceptance of foreign donations or the involvement of non-Montserratian nationals in the campaign process. The lack of legal status for political parties, coupled with the absence of accountability measures, represents a significant gap in the regulatory framework. This legal deficiency undermines transparency and accountability in the electoral process, leaving room for the potential abuse of campaign finance and possible outside influence. There was no evidence of the misuse of state resources brought to the attention of the Mission.

MEDIA

Montserrat has one primary media outlet, Radio Montserrat (ZJB). This is a non-statutory body and department within the civil service that reports directly to the Cabinet, an arrangement that limits its independence from political influence. Radio Montserrat attempted to cover the electoral campaign in a balanced manner but does not operate within a structure that typically enshrines to them the freedoms of a public broadcaster. Its partially unmoderated call-in programme, *What's on Your Mind*, was discontinued, allegedly due to accusations of hate speech and criticism of the government. In the absence of free airtime, parties and candidates purchased airtime slots, each prefaced and concluded with a disclaimer, at commercial rates on a first-come, first-served basis. Opposition parties raised concerns about the radio team's self censorship and the governing party and its candidates, being privileged in the radio's election coverage. With the *Montserrat Reporter* ceasing publication and the *Alliouagana Express* newsletter having a very limited circulation, citizens increasingly turned to social media for information.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

The United Nations Convention Against the Discrimination of Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have not yet been extended to Montserrat. Although international instruments are not automatically applicable to British Overseas Territories,

international human rights law creates obligations concerning the conduct of elections in Montserrat.³

The Constitution affords protection from discrimination on any grounds, including “sex, sexual orientation, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.”

The overwhelming majority of election administration personnel at all levels are women, including all members of the Election Commission, its Chairperson, the Returning Officer, Assistant Returning Officers, Presiding Officers, and most poll clerks and counting officials. Key public office positions are also held by women, including the Registering Officer, Deputy Governor, and Attorney General.

There are no legal or administrative barriers preventing women from participating in elections as voters or candidates. Although all three parties contesting were led by men, a record number of women ran for office (15 of the 34 candidates were women). Candidates did not specifically target women voters or campaign on gender issues. Three of the nine candidates elected were women.

Youth participation was notably limited. Few younger voters were observed on election day. The mission found that many young Montserratians opted not to register for elections, with some citing a lack of information about the voter registration process. Increased efforts could be made to engage and politically educate younger and first-time voters.

On a positive note, steps were taken to include persons with disabilities, those with limited mobility and older voters. The mission commends the establishment of a mobile polling station and the accessibility provisions put in place in polling stations. Ramps were installed at polling stations to facilitate access for voters with mobility difficulties, and provisions for assisted voting were also in place.

ELECTION DAY: VOTING

The seven Mission observers monitored election procedures across all 13 polling stations nationwide and accompanied the mobile polling team to all three of its locations, rating the overall process largely as very good.

In compliance with legislation, all campaign posters were removed prior to election day, and no active campaigning was observed during polling day. The Mission was aware of one candidate who raised a complaint with the Electoral Commission regarding another party's campaign posts on Facebook during election day. This complaint remains unresolved, given the lack of regulation surrounding online campaigning and the absence of digital campaign guidelines from the Electoral Commission.

Polling stations opened punctually at 7:00h in the morning, and the day proceeded smoothly and peacefully, with all materials provided and police present at each location. Most polling staff were women, all of whom demonstrated strong procedural knowledge. In a recent provision by the Electoral Commission, polling staff were added to the voter register of the division where they were stationed, ensuring their ability to vote. Police, and occasionally military personnel, were

³ UN ICCPR Committee (2015) CCPR/C/GBR/CO/7 noted with concern that human rights instruments applicable to the UK are not directly applicable to the British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies.

stationed at every polling station and at the counting centre, performing their duties in full compliance with the law and contributing to an orderly voting environment.

The identification of voters was not always consistent, with ID information or name spellings sometimes not matching the entries in the voter register. The Electoral Commission and political parties put significant effort into voter education, focusing on marking the ballot correctly with a cross or an "X" for up to nine candidates. Voter guidance continued at polling stations, where Presiding Officers provided additional instructions before issuing ballot papers. There was minimal ballot spoilage and a low rate of invalid ballots (1.8%), indicating a robust understanding of the detailed criteria for ballot validity by the voters.

All ballot papers and counterfoils are serial numbered and the voter registration number of the voters is written on the counterfoil. Such a numbering system can trace ballots back to individual voters by court order, raising concerns about upholding the secrecy of the vote.

Accessibility of polling stations and polling materials remains challenging for persons with disabilities as not all polling stations are independently accessible to persons with physical disabilities and no aids like a magnifier for persons with limited eyesight are available. Background colours behind candidates' pictures, however, provide voters with an easier way of identifying the candidates of a preferred party.

This election saw the introduction of a mobile polling station for the first time. This innovative development was professionally and securely conducted and provided a considerable number of elderly, hospitalised and imprisoned voters with the opportunity to cast their vote in a more dignified and accessible manner. Such provisions could be extended and developed for future elections to increase the inclusion of different groups in Montserrat's elections, such as those who would benefit from voting in their private homes.

Agents of all three parties were present in all polling stations and in most locations the polling layout protected the secrecy of the vote. The Mission was informed that no major incidents took place during election day. The closing of polling stations observed prior to the transfer of materials to the counting centre was less orderly than the polling process and the process of closing polling, reconciling votes and ballots, and handing sensitive materials on to the Assistant Returning Officer could benefit from further training and attention.

ELECTION DAY: VERIFICATION AND COUNT

The counting process was conducted with a high level of professionalism and transparency, providing the public with live, real-time updates both online and at the counting centre. The count was open to the public, including the media, though the presence of party agents was limited. Each polling division's count was overseen by an Assistant Returning Officer, supported by two tally clerks and one electronic tally clerk. Each ballot was displayed to any party agents present, announced aloud, and recorded on paper and online, with a reconciliation performed after every ten ballots. Disputed ballots were examined by the Assistant Returning Officer, and if necessary, reviewed by the Returning Officer. Election laws were applied rigorously, even in cases where voter intent appeared clear. This high level of transparency greatly reinforced public confidence in the accuracy of the election outcome.

The increased voter turnout by five per cent, up to 67.5 percent, from 62.5 percent in 2019, resulted in a clear victory for one of the opposition parties. This increased turnout demonstrates

strong civic engagement among Montserratians and gives a mandate to the incoming government. The UA party claimed five of the nine seats and is expected to form the next Cabinet, while PDM secured three seats, with the remaining seat won by the former ruling party MCAP.

ELECTORAL JUSTICE

Montserrat's judiciary operates under the framework of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (ECSC), which is the highest court for the territory. The judicial system is independent of the executive and legislative branches. There is one Magistrate Court and one High Court Judge on the island. The ECSC sits in Saint Lucia.

The complaints and appeals process complies with international principles of judicial review and second instance. The right to redress is granted to voters and candidates, who can lodge a complaint for irregularities with the Election Commission, the Supervisor of Elections, and the Returning Officer. Their decisions can be appealed before the High Court whose rulings can be challenged before the Court of Appeal. The High Court has jurisdiction over petitions on returns. The legislation codifies procedures and shortened legal deadlines.

The Electoral Act outlines a number of electoral offences and their corresponding sanctions. Offences include, for example, personation, bribery, treating, and campaigning on election day. While confidence in the electoral dispute resolution mechanisms do not seem to be an issue of concern, there has never been an electoral offence reported.

Only one case was brought before court during the entire process (see candidate registration section). The case was expeditiously resolved in both instances before the High Court and on appeal before the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court. The mission commends the speed at which this matter was addressed, with the rulings being handed down expeditiously.

FINAL REPORT

This Preliminary Statement is the Mission's initial findings, published two days after election day. Within two months of election day a further, longer report will be published, including recommendations for consideration which the Mission believes will enhance future elections.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The CPA BIMR Election Observation Mission wishes to express its gratitude to all those who supported the work of the Mission, including election officials, candidates, and civil society organisations. We are grateful to our observers and analysts for participating.

CPA BIMR ELECTION OBSERVATION SERVICES:

The first objective of the BIMR Strategy is to strengthen parliaments and the skills of their members. As part of this work, CPA BIMR facilitates election observations when invited to do so.

For more information about these services, please contact the CPA BIMR Secretariat at cpabimr@parliament.uk.



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