

**REPORT OF THE
CARICOM ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION
TO
CURAÇAO**

**GENERAL ELECTION
MARCH 21, 2025**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By way of a letter dated 11 February 2025, Dr. Richeline C. Joe, President of the Supreme Election Council of Curaçao (*Konseho Supremo Elektoral*) (SEC), invited the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to send a technical team to observe the General Elections in Curaçao, which were held on March 21, 2025. In response, the Secretary-General of the CARICOM agreed to deploy a CARICOM Election Observer Mission (CEOM).

The CEOM Team comprised the Chief of Mission, Mr. Corey C. Greenidge, Attorney-at-Law and Member of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission of Barbados; and Dr. Raj Rabindranath Jadnanansing, a Member of the Independent Electoral Council in Suriname. Mr. Brian Bellevue served as the CARICOM Secretariat's Administrative and Technical Support Officer to the Team. The combined wealth of election management and observation experience of the team was more than adequate, to meet the mandate of the CEOM.

The CEOM's key objectives included observation of the election process, including the socio-political environment; collection of quantitative and qualitative data; identifying notable areas that may require improvement in future elections, and making appropriate and timely recommendations. The Observer Team attended several pre-election day meetings with high-ranking government leaders, stakeholder groups, and civil society members. On Election Day, the Team observed the distribution and deployment of the polling station materials and personnel and visited 23 of the 107 polling stations to observe the election process from the opening of the polls to the closing of the polls and the counting of the ballots.

Based on our observations and analysis, the CEOM Team is satisfied that the election held in Curaçao on 21 March 2025 was conducted smoothly and without major disruptions or incidents. It is our view, therefore, that the result of the election fairly and in all material respects, reflects the will of the people of Curaçao.

The CEOM team congratulates the members and staff of the SEC led by Dr. Richeline C. Joe on a successful election and we hereby express our appreciation for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to the CEOM Team, which contributed tremendously to the success of our mission

This report of the CEOM is presented to the Secretary-General of CARICOM for consideration and onward transmission to the Prime Minister and the SEC. The CEOM Team encourages the electoral stakeholders to review our recommendations with a view to strengthening the electoral process in Curaçao for future elections.

1. INTRODUCTION

As a community of independent States and non-independent territories (Associate Members), CARICOM is committed to democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the preservation of democratic traditions and institutions. It is this commitment as well as the recognition that the preservation of the democratic tradition is of joint value that drives initiatives such as election observation among CARICOM Member States. Since the decade of the 90s, electoral cooperation among CARICOM Member States and CARICOM's role in promoting and/or facilitating the peaceful settlement of disputes that tend to derail or subvert internal electoral processes has grown significantly.

This growth reinforces the view held by Member States and Associate Member States that election observation can play an important role in promoting transparency as well as enhancing public confidence in an electoral process. It is against this backdrop that by way of a letter dated 11 February 2025, Dr. Richeline C. Joe, President of the Supreme Election Council of Curaçao (SEC) invited CARICOM to send a technical team to observe the General Elections in Curaçao, which were held on 21 March 2025. In response, the Secretary-General of the CARICOM agreed to deploy a CEOM comprised of three team members.

It should be noted that the mere presence of the CEOM Team does not in and of itself confer legitimacy or give credibility to the electoral process. The overarching objective was to mount an election observation of a high standard and quality to serve as a viable platform to support existing democratic traditions within CARICOM as part of a wider policy of supporting democracy.

Observer teams from the Organization of American States (OAS) and The Central Voting Bureau Sint Maarten also attended the General Election in Curacao. The teams worked collaboratively in many instances, and this afforded us the opportunity to share information and compare our observations, which ultimately allowed for a more comprehensive suite of recommendations.

1.1 SCOPE OF SERVICES

The scope of services as outlined within the appendix to the CARICOM Handbook issued to the CEOM Team was as follows: -

On the Election Day:

- **Observe** the electoral process, including the preparations for the start of the poll, the casting of votes, the closure of the polling stations, the counting of the ballots and the preparation of the Statement of the Poll;
- **Collect** information on the results at the voting tables to assist in the quantitative verification of the results; and
- **Collect** qualitative observations regarding the voting process, comportment of the electoral officials and political actors, and the overall electoral environment;

During the post-electoral period:

- **Observe** and **assess** the outcome of the elections and the initial immediate impact on the social and political environment; and
- **Collaborate** in the preparation of the Report of the Observer Mission to be compiled by the Chief of Mission, through the submission of observation sheets and oral reports on pre-election observations and findings on the day of the elections.

1.2 ELECTORAL STAKEHOLDERS

The CEOM Team congratulates the leadership and staff of the SEC, the poll workers, the political parties, the security forces, and the people of Curaçao, on the smooth conduct and execution of the General Elections.

The CEOM Team extends its appreciation to the SEC for the warmth and hospitality extended during the week-long mission. Special thanks to Professor Dr. Gilber Cijntje, Rector of Inter-Continental University of the Caribbean; Mrs. Ilianne Schotborgh, Legal and Legislative Affairs Officer; and Mrs. Peggy Isenia, Legal Advisor, Member of SEC, each of whom gave informative presentations that contextualized the historical and legislative framework of the electoral system in Curaçao.

We extend further appreciation to the leaders of the Government who took time in the capacity of their good offices to meet with us as part of our pre-election efforts, including:

- The Governor of Curaçao, Her Excellency Mrs. Lucille George-Wout;
- Speaker of Parliament, Mrs. Charetti America-Francisca; and
- Prime Minister, Mr. Gilmar Pisas

The ensuing report presents detailed information on Curaçao and focuses on key aspects of the CEOM Team's scope of services. The report provides an overview of Curaçao, describes the electoral framework within which elections were held in the country and offers the observations of the CEOM Team during the conduct of the General Election. Finally, the report provides the recommendations being made by the CEOM Team to the Government of Curaçao.

2. COUNTRY PROFILE

2.1 CURAÇAO

Curaçao is a constituent island country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the southern Caribbean Sea, specifically the Dutch Caribbean region, approximately 65 km north of Venezuela. Curaçao includes the main island of Curaçao and the much smaller, uninhabited island of Klein Curaçao.

The country is a parliamentary democracy with a unicameral parliament but remains a constituent country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. As such, the Head of State is King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands who is represented by the Governor General, Her Excellency Lucille A. George-Wout, who has held this office since 4 November 2013. The Head of Government is the Prime Minister, Mr. Gilmar Pisas, who has held this office since 14 June 2021.

The population of Curaçao is 155,823 according to the 2023 Census. The population is multi-ethnic, with the majority, at 75.4%, being of Curaçaoan descent, followed by 6% Dutch, 3.6% Dominican, and 3% Colombian. Several other smaller ethnic groups combine to make up the remainder.¹ The major religion is Roman Catholicism, which is practiced by 72.4% of the population. The most common language spoken on the island is Papiamentu, which is used by 80% of the population, while 8.8% speak Dutch, 5.6% speak Spanish, and 3.1% speak English.

Curaçao is categorized as a high-income country with GDP per capita at US\$22,192.40, according to the 2023 World Bank estimates, and real GDP growth in 2023 of 2.6%. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao in 2022, the unemployment rate was 13.1%.

2.2 HISTORY

Curaçao's electoral history is intertwined with its evolving relationship with the Netherlands, which conquered the island from the Spanish in 1634, and its position within

¹ CIA World Factbook 2011 est.

the broader Caribbean context. Following the exclusion of the vast majority of the population from voting in the early colonial period, significant changes occurred in 1937 when the first elections took place in response to growing social and labour unrest, including the major 1936 strike. Nonetheless, participation was still restricted, and universal suffrage was finally introduced in 1948.

The Netherlands Antilles, comprising six Caribbean territories, including Curaçao, was established in 1954 as an autonomous part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This granted the islands significant internal self-governance. During this time, a multiparty system developed, with coalitions being common due to the proportional representation system. Since 2010, with the dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles, Curaçao and Sint Maarten became constituent countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, joining Aruba, which had already been granted this status in 1986. This meant even more autonomy, but defense and foreign affairs remained under the purview of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Governor, as Head of Government, represents the King but is not involved in the day-to-day business of the government. The ministerial cabinet is headed by the Prime Minister, currently His Excellency Gilmar Pisas.

2.5 MAP OF CURAÇAO



2.5 FLAG OF CURAÇAO



3. ELECTORAL FRAMEWORK

This section of the report provides pertinent information on the electoral framework within which elections are conducted in Curaçao. Moreover, an outline of the legislation and authorities that guide the electoral process is offered.

3.1 ELECTORAL AUTHORITIES

The SEC, pursuant to the National Ordinance (PB 2020, no.111), is an independent administrative body that has legal personality and an independently managed budget.

The Council is charged with organising the elections of Curaçao and determining the results of those elections, as laid down in the Curaçao Electoral Regulations.

3.2 ELECTORAL AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Curaçao has a 21-member Parliament (Staten van Curaçao), also known as the Estates of Curaçao. The 21 members are elected by proportional representation, subject to a minimum threshold.









There is a vibrant multi-party system, with some of the older, more established parties remaining influential, even while new parties emerge. Given this system, shifting alliances remain the norm. In recent electoral cycles, including the last elections in 2021, no single party has secured an outright majority, necessitating broad-based coalitions. During the last elections, with a voter turnout of approximately 74%, the Movement for the Future of Curaçao (MFK) party secured five seats and gained four residual seats, amounting to a total of nine seats. MFK then formed a government in collaboration with the National People's Party (PNP), which won four overall seats. The PNP, however, departed the coalition in 2024 after MFK's parliamentary faction withdrew its support for two members of the Green Party.









In the lead up to the election on 21 March 2025, eight parties were authorised to participate, including six currently holding seats in Parliament and, therefore, automatically qualifying, as well as Miho Kòrsou and Kousa Promé, which achieved the voter threshold (848) in preliminary elections. A University of the Dutch Caribbean (UDC) poll revealed that 67% of respondents would vote for the Movementu Futuro Kòrsou (MFK), the party led by Prime Minister Pisas, followed by the Partido Nashonal di Pueblo (PNP), with 13% of voter intentions. Approximately 110,000 persons are eligible to vote.

Voters were most concerned about economic growth, high unemployment, the public debt, corruption, and lack of accountability, as well as the relationship with the Netherlands. On the electoral front, issues of campaign financing, electoral transparency,

and access to party manifestos, as well as negotiations among coalitions, were expected to be a key part of the public discourse and worthy of attention. Kòrsou Esun Mihó (KEM) leader Michelangelo ‘Lo’ Martines accused the government of political motives following his incarceration, which was also expected to feature in the discourse. Despite these initial expectations, however, in the ensuing days immediately before Election Day, while the CEOM Team was on the ground in Curaçao, there was little by way of disquiet with respect to these issues.

3.3 POLITICAL PARTIES PARTICIPATING IN 2025 ELECTIONS

Profile	Leader	Logo
The Movement for the Future of Curaçao/Movementu Futuro Kòrsou (MFK) is part of the governing coalition. The party was founded in 2010, entering the then-island council of Curaçao after the General Election of 27 August 2010. Its leader, Gerrit Schotte became the first Prime Minister of Curaçao, as part of a coalition. In March 2017, Gilmar Pisas became the second MFK prime minister of Curaçao. MFK won 9 of 21 seats in the last elections.	 <p><i>Prime Minister Gilmar Pisas</i></p>	
The National People's Party/Partido Nashonal di Pueblo (PNP) is a Christian democratic political party founded in 1948 by Moises Frumencio da Costa Gomez, the first Prime Minister of the Netherlands Antilles. It was formerly part of the governing coalition formed after the 2021 elections. The PNP won 4 of 21 seats in the last elections.	 <p><i>Ruthmilda Larmonie-Cecilia</i></p>	
The Real Alternative Party/Partido Alternativa Real (PAR) was formed after constitutional referendums held on the islands in the Netherlands Antilles in 1993, when a majority voted against the dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles. Its 2025 political platform focuses on economic growth through investment and entrepreneurship, advocating for less government intervention and a stronger private sector. It won 4 of 21 seats in the 2021 general election.	 <p><i>Quincy Girigorie</i></p>	
The MAN is a political party founded in 1971. MAN has joined with the National Innovation Party (PIN), founded in 2017, for the 2025 elections and has outlined a series of sweeping reforms aimed at political renewal, an active government role in the economy, strict environmental policies, social reforms, and a new	 <p><i>Giselle Mc William</i></p>	

tax system. MAN won 2 of 21 seats in the 2021 general election.		
The Curaçao is the Best / Kòrsou Esun Mihó (KEM) party was started in 2019. It tends to focus on cooperation with the Netherlands and job growth. The party leader, Michelangelo 'Lo' Martines, was arrested in November 2024 on suspicion of drug trafficking and money laundering and is expected to remain detained until the hearing of his case in June 2025. The KEM won one seat in the last elections.	 <i>Michelangelo 'Lo' Martines</i>	
The Work for Curaçao / Trabou pa Kòrsou (TPK) was founded in 2020 by candidates of various political parties. The TPK won one seat in the last elections.	 <i>Rennox Calmes</i>	
Curaçao Promise Movement / Movementu Kousa Promé was founded in 2015. A key focus of the party currently is maintaining Curaçao's status as a peaceful and neutral territory, particular in light of Dutch and Nato military activity on the island. Since its founding, it has been unsuccessful in having a representative in the Estates.	 <i>Rene Rosalia</i>	
The Better Curaçao / Mihó Kòrsou part was formed in September 2024 and is a newcomer to the elections. Private sector development is expected to be a key focus of the party in these elections.	 <i>Gilbert Ricardo</i>	

4. ELECTION OBSERVATIONS

The quantitative and qualitative findings of the CARICOM Election Observation Mission to Curaçao are presented herein. Prior to Election Day, the Mission met with key stakeholders to obtain perspectives from among various civil society and political groups on the overall electoral process and the organisation of the General Election. On Polling Day, the members of the CEOM observed the conduct of elections at 23 of the 107 polling stations. The findings of the Mission are presented below.

4.1 PRE-ELECTION OBSERVATIONS

During the pre-election period in Curaçao, the CEOM Team, held several meetings with the SEC. Several presentations were made to the Observers, including:

1. History of voting in Curaçao and Seat calculation, presented by Prof. Dr. Gilbert Cijntje, Rector of Inter-Continental University of the Caribbean.
2. Curaçao as an Autonomous Country; the Constitutional and Fundamental Rights, presented Mrs. Ilianne Schotborgh, Legal and Legislative Affairs.
3. The SEC Regulations (Lei Konseho Supremo Elecktoral), presented by Mrs. Peggy Isenia, Legal Advisor, Member of SEC.

These presentations proved to be a valuable initiative by the SEC to afford the Observers the opportunity to gain a comprehensive understanding of the extent of the preparations for Election Day, and to assess their expectations with respect to any anticipated difficulties on Election Day.

The SEC organised a meet-and-greet international observer's event, where we met some of the leaders of the political parties. Having concluded the meetings, it was clear that the SEC was more than reasonably prepared for the conduct of the election. In addition, there was consensus among the groups that the environment, though filled with anticipation, was generally calm, and as a result, the leaders and the groups we spoke with expected that the election would take place without any major issues or incidences of concern.

Of note was that the CEOM Team was not provided with a national map detailing the locations of the polling stations. While not prohibitive, greater effort had to be made to plan the CEOM Team's route and visitation schedule for Election Day.

On the day prior to Election Day, the CEOM Team paid courtesy visits to the following high-ranking government officials:

1. The Governor of Curaçao, Her Excellency Mrs. Lucille George-Wout;
2. Speaker of Parliament, Mrs. Charetti America-Francisca; and
3. Prime Minister, Mr. Gilmar Pisas.

The following key points were made during our discussions with the stakeholder groups as well as with the high-ranking government officials: -

- **Changes to the current electoral system** – Some stakeholders expressed concern over the current electoral system, suggesting that it ultimately does not result in representative governance and as such that the entire system need revamping. Some government officials, on the other hand, were adamant that a discussion about changing the system was not necessary. These officials highlighted that Curaçao had a party system and not an individual system and that the current structure and integrity of the system should be maintained. That said, however, there was a general admonition by stakeholders to political parties to be mindful of how they wield the levers of power.
- **Preliminary election voter suppression** – Ahead of the 21 March 2025 poll, preliminary elections were held on 1 and 2 February 2025. Out of the eight (8) parties that appeared on the ballot on Election Day, six (6) already had seats in the Assembly, and therefore automatically qualified, and two additional parties, Miho Kòrsou and Kousa Promé, achieved the requisite voter threshold in the preliminary election.

Several stakeholders voiced the concern that the ruling party held public events on the same days as the preliminary elections and surmised that this was an intentional attempt to suppress the voter turnout so as to limit the number of additional parties who would qualify to be on the general election ballot. The voter turnout was reported to be low, with fewer than five thousand (5,000) voters casting ballots in the preliminary election.

The counterargument was made that the preliminary election was held over two days, and polls were open from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., and therefore, voters had ample time to cast their votes. Despite this, many still believed that several roads had been closed, causing attendees at the public events to have to travel by boat. Others further postulated that despite the length of time the polls were open, the voters' attention would have already been taken up with the public festivities. This issue brought the previous admonition - to be mindful of how political parties in government wield the levers of power - into sharper focus.

4.2 OPENING OF THE POLL

On Election Day, the CEOM Team began its observations at the World Trade Centre in Willemstad, which served as the central point for the distribution and deployment of all the polling station materials and personnel, including the police and security services. This process went relatively smoothly, and the various groups were dispatched on time to their respective polling stations.

We continued our observations by attending three polling stations half an hour prior to the opening of the polls. The CEOM Team's overall assessment of the opening of the polls was that it was efficient and well-executed. With respect to the polling stations visited, the poll workers conducted the preparatory procedures efficiently in order to meet the stipulated opening time of 8 am. Prior to the commencement of voting, the ballot boxes

were demonstrated to be empty and were subsequently sealed in the presence of observers and party representatives. All the polling stations visited opened on time as scheduled without incident. According to media reports, there was one polling station which did not open on time due, inadvertently, to restricted access to the building. Our understanding is that this was quickly resolved, enabling the polling station to open and voting to proceed.

At the polling stations visited, there were the required number of electoral officials present. The Polling stations observed comprised the stipulated number of officials, namely four persons – the President and 3 others, as well as adequate levels of security officers. There were only representatives from the MFK and the PNP present at the opening of the polls.

4.3 VOTING PROCESS

During Election Day, the CEOM Team observed the voting process at twenty (23) polling stations out of one hundred and seven (107), at which approximately 23% of the registered voters were slated to vote. Our observations also included the closing procedures and the counting of the votes at three of the 23 polling stations visited. The CEOM Team also had the unique opportunity to observe the voting process in the polling station located at the Curaçao Centre for Correction and Detention.

The CEOM Team observed that there was a steady flow of voters throughout the day. There were no long lines, and therefore, voters did not experience prolonged waiting periods to cast their ballots.

The following general observations were made across the polling stations visited:

- **Election officials and poll workers** – From our observations, the polling staff were well prepared and trained and performed their duties competently. Voting procedures and protocols were followed without major incident, and where there were any irregularities, the president of the polling station seemed capable of handling the situations as they arose. For example, at one polling station, we observed that a voter had signed her name to the ballot. The president of the polling station quickly explained the irregularity to the voter and proceeded to void the first ballot and issue a new one. On another occasion, a voter accidentally placed their identification card in the ballot box. The president of the polling station had to explain to the voter that the ballot box could not be opened and that the ID would have to be retrieved during the counting process. Of note is that on at least two occasions, the CEOM Team observed that the president of the polling station was absent from the polling station for an unusual length of time without any reasonable explanation offered.
- **Voter identification** – it was observed that all voters presented formal identification prior to casting their vote.

- **Signage** – multiple polling stations were often located within the same facility, however, the signage for the individual polling stations was not adequate. Signage was commonly placed high up above the entrance to the polling station, generally out of the line of sight of the voters. It was commonplace, therefore, for voters to be uncertain as to which polling station was theirs and it was observed that generally persons resorted to asking security personnel and party representatives to ascertain the location of their respective polling stations.
- **Accessibility** – the polling stations visited were adequately equipped with facilities to accommodate persons with disabilities and elderly voters. Where assistance was needed, persons were allowed to assist persons with disabilities and the elderly into the voting booth, but not to assist with the actual voting process. That said, however, the CEOM Team did observe one occasion in which it was clear that a family member instructed an older family member who to vote for. There were a few instances where mothers with babies or young children were not allowed to take the children into the voting booth. In each instance, the child was left in the care of a polling official, and the mother was able to vote.
- **Voting booths** – at several of the polling stations visited, the CEOM Team noted that there was inconsistency in what constituted a voting booth. In many instances, the election officials at the polling station deconstructed ballot boxes and used them to fashion a voting booth by using adhesive tape (often the tape with the official logo of the SEC meant to secure the ballot boxes). Discussions with officials at the post-election meeting revealed that there was a miscalculation in the ordering process for the voting booths, and therefore, they had to improvise by issuing additional ballot boxes that could be used as voting booths. Despite this, the use of ballot boxes as voting booths did not compromise the required privacy for voters casting their ballots. The Team did, however, encounter one instance where the window behind a voting booth was not adequately covered.
- **Coloured ballots** – The CEOM Team observed that all the ballots used at the polling stations visited were coloured ballots. This was important given the controversy that emerged from the last election, where it was reported that in some instance, black and white ballots were used.
- **Lunch for polling officials** – the CEOM Team observed that at many of the polling stations, polling officials experienced significant delays in receiving their lunch, sometimes until late afternoon. Despite several complaints, this did not seem to hinder the smooth operation of the polling stations, and the issue was subsequently rectified with meal deliveries.
- **Presence of Observers** – The CEOM Team encountered instances at certain polling stations of an apparent lack of awareness of election officials regarding the possible presence of observers. Consequently, they exhibited reluctance to permit the Team entry to the polling station and refused to answer our questions. The majority of polling stations visited, however, were fully aware and expected our visit and were very cooperative.

- **Restroom facilities** – In some instances, the restroom facilities for polling officials and the voting public were inadequate.
- **Party representatives** – the CEOM Team consistently observed that only the MFK and PNP parties had agents present at the polling stations visited, with one or two other parties having only a sparse or limited presence. This may have been an indication of the disparity between the different parties as it relates to available resources and volunteers. Likewise, throughout the polling districts, party signage and advertising for MFK was predominantly present, and to a lesser extent, the PNP. Other parties exhibited minimal visibility or were, in most cases, unrepresented.
- **Voting at the Centre for Correction and Detention** – The CEOM Team had the unique opportunity to observe the voting process at the Centre for Correction and Detention. The process was well organised and very controlled. The inmates were selected to vote in batches. Each batch was first taken into a separate room to be instructed and educated on the voting process prior to casting their ballots. Thereafter, inmates were allowed to file into the polling station one by one to cast their votes.

4.4 CLOSING OF THE POLL AND COUNTING OF BALLOTS

The CEOM Team was present to observe the closing of the polls and counting process at three separate polling stations and made the following observations:

- The polling stations closed on time at 7:00 pm.
- There were no lines at the polling station we observed, and therefore, there was no issue of a cut-off point in the line to allow voters to cast their ballots after the official closing.
- All of the ballot boxes remained sealed and secured at the closing of the polling station and prior to the commencement of counting.
- Agents and representatives of the parties did not remain after the polls were closed and the counting commenced.
- There was a lack of clear procedural structure in the counting process, which led to inconsistencies in the polling stations we observed. This resulted in an inordinate amount of time being taken for counting the ballots in one polling station compared to another, which employed a more strategic approach. Furthermore, some poll workers appeared very inexperienced and received insufficient guidance from more seasoned personnel. In one particular station, staff demonstrated a lack of urgency in their approach to the counting process, even pausing to play music and dance. While this could be interpreted as a coping mechanism after a protracted day, they ultimately completed the task, albeit with noticeable lack of alacrity.

- Despite the visible education materials displayed in the polling station, it appeared that poll workers remained unclear on the criteria for ballot validity and spoilage. This resulted, initially, in several valid ballots being set aside as spoiled by the poll workers. Fortunately, the president of the polling station made a final determination that reflected a more accurate assessment of the ballots that were, in fact, valid.
- During the counting process, poll workers sought the opinion of the security officer assigned to the CEOM Team regarding ballot validity. This was considered irregular, as the security officer's role within the polling station was not that of an election official.

4.5 RESULTS

The General Election saw the MFK gaining 13 seats in the parliament – 11 gained outright and two (2) additional seats allocated through the secondary allocation process, giving them the ability to have a governing majority without the need to form a coalition. The PNP gained four (4) seats – three (3) outright and one (1) additional, while the PAR and the coalition party MAN/PIN each gained two (2) seats – one (1) outright and one (1) additional.

Following the announcement of the published results, there was no indication that the results of the election were not accepted, and the atmosphere in the country remained calm.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations made by the CEOM Team are provided below. The guidance offered is founded on international standards and best practices on electoral frameworks, election management, and election observation. It is the hope and expectation of the CEOM that the recommendations will be used to strengthen the democratic processes and institutions within Curaçao.

Our recommendations are as follows: -

- **Campaign finance** – During our discussions with stakeholders and high-ranking officials, there was a general disquiet regarding the financing of campaigns, where it was very evident that one party was able to deploy markedly superior resources to their campaign compared to the other parties. Consideration should be given to reforms that would have the effect of leveling the playing field as it relates to the amount of money that is available and permitted to be used to fund a political campaign. Part of the reforms could include a statutory reporting requirement where the public can be made aware of how a particular political campaign is financed and by whom.
- **Voter suppression** – It is recommended that consideration be given to legislative reform that prohibits planned public activities on preliminary election days or on election days that in any way can be viewed as competing with the election process. In particular, no political party, whether in government or opposition,

should be allowed to plan, orchestrate, or host, whether directly or indirectly, any public event that competes with the election process.

- **National map with polling station** – From the perspective of facilitating the observer teams, consider having a map of the island with an overlay of the polling stations available. This would aid greatly in the planning process for observation on Election Day so that the teams can be deployed in the most efficient way.
- **Signage** – Significant improvements need to be made in the area of signage. At all the polling stations visited, the signage was inadequate and led to uncertainty, with voters not clear which polling station they were assigned to vote at. This did not result in any major issues since the flow of voters was slow to moderate, and voters inquired of party agents and security personnel, who pointed them in the right direction. That said, however, in a scenario where there is a heavy flow of voters and long lines, signage becomes more critical to avoid voters standing in long lines for a long period of time, only to then discover that they were at the wrong polling station.
- **Assistance to the elderly and persons with disabilities** – While the Regulations are clear on this topic, greater training may need to be done to ensure that election officials and poll workers strictly adhere to the Regulations.. On two separate occasions, elderly voters were accompanied into the actual private voting booth and it was clear that at least on one occasion, a family member instructed the elder person who to vote for.
- **Mothers with babies and infants** – It is recommended that the SEC revisit the Regulation regarding mothers who present to the polling stations with small children or babies in arms. Not every mother may be comfortable handing over their child to a stranger to vote, and in some cases, it may also be difficult for the child. This situation could be viewed as a barrier to women exercising their franchise to vote.
- **Counting process** – Great effort needs to be expended towards training of poll workers and election officials for the counting process. Our observations recorded several inconsistencies in the counting process that can easily lead to irregularities. It is our understanding that standardised training was already in place, however the disparities witnessed at the polling stations observed indicated that these efforts need to be intensified.
- **Live results** – We observed that the results were broadcast in real time as they were called in from the polling stations. Consideration should be given to a brief time delay between the receiving of the results from the polling stations and when they are broadcast. This is a cautionary recommendation in the event that there is a discrepancy that must be corrected. In a close election, changing the count live could engender speculation of impropriety.

6. CONCLUSION

It is the view of the CEOM Team that the general election held in Curaçao on 21 March 2025 was conducted smoothly and without major incident, and the result thereof reflected the will of the people of Curaçao. The opening procedures, voting processes and closing and counting procedures observed were within the bounds of the published Rules and Procedures for parliamentary elections in Curaçao, and we report that there were no major areas of concern.

Corey C. Greenidge
Chief of Mission

APPENDIX I: ARRIVAL STATEMENT

CARICOM ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION TO THE GENERAL ELECTIONS OF CURAÇAO MARCH 21, 2025 **ARRIVAL STATEMENT**

By way of letter dated February 11, 2025, Dr. Richeline C. Joe, President of the Supreme Election Council of Curaçao (SEC) invited the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to send a technical team to observe the upcoming general elections in Curaçao. In response, the Secretary-General of the CARICOM agreed to field a three-person team for the General Elections of Curaçao which will be held on Friday, March 21, 2025.

The Observer Team is comprised of Chief of Mission, Mr. Corey C. Greenidge, Attorney-at-Law and Member of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission of Barbados; and Dr. Raj Rabindranath Jadnanansing, a Member of the Independent Electoral Council in Surinam. The Team Members possess a combined wealth of experience in election management and observation. The Observer Team is joined by Mr. Brian Bellevue who serves as the CARICOM Secretariat's Administrative and Technical Support Officer to the Team.

Members of the CARICOM Team arrived in Curaçao on March 17th and 18th, 2025 and immediately met to discuss its role and functions as well as the priorities pertaining to its performance at and around the polling stations, and other critical elements associated with Curaçao's electoral processes.

Along with the Observer Teams from the Organization of American States (OAS) and The Central Voting Bureau Sint Maarten, the CARICOM Team attended a meeting on Wednesday, March 19, 2025, with members of SEC, headed by Dr. Richeline C. Joe, President of SEC. During this first meeting with the SEC, the Observer Teams received information regarding the election and the anticipated procedures for election day. The SEC team also fielded questions from the Observer Teams with respect to their expectations for the election process, including any concerns emanating from previous elections.

Ahead of Election Day, the SEC has scheduled the following presentations for the Observers:

- (1) History of voting in Curaçao & Seat calculation, presented by Prof. Dr. Gilbert Cijntje, Rector of Inter-Continental University of the Caribbean.
- (2) Curaçao as an Autonomous Country; the Constitutional and Fundamental Rights, presented Mrs. Ilianne Schotborgh, Legal and Legislative Affairs.

- (3) The SEC Regulations (Lei Konseho Supremo Elecktoral), presented by Mrs. Peggy Isenia, Legal Advisor, Member of SEC.

After the presentations, the CARICOM Team will also have the opportunity to meet with representatives of the main political parties and other civil-society stakeholders.

On the day prior to election day the CARICOM Team will pay courtesy visits to the following high-ranking government officials:

- (1) The Governor of Curaçao, Her Excellency Mrs. Lucille George-Wout
- (2) Speaker of Parliament, Mrs. Charetti America-Francisca
- (3) Prime Minister, Mr. Gilmar Pisas

Having received a copy of the 107 Polling Station locations, the CARICOM Team will liaise with its OAS counterparts so that a large and significant percentage of polling stations can be visited and observed.

On Election Day, the Team intends to focus on the opening of the poll procedures, the unfolding of the polling process, the closing of the polls and the vote count in the polling stations where the opening of the polls were observed.

The CARICOM Team wishes to express its appreciation for the support, cooperation and hospitality received from the President and staff of the SEC, and other Public/Statutory Institutions of Curaçao. It was evident upon our arrival that the President and staff of the SEC prepared a well-structured and organized visit which will allow the CARICOM Team to execute its mission with maximum efficiency.

MR. COREY C. GREENIDGE
CHIEF OF MISSION
CARICOM Observation Team
CURAÇAO
MARCH 19, 2025

APPENDIX II: PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

CARICOM ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION TO THE GENERAL ELECTIONS OF CURAÇAO MARCH 21, 2025 **PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

By way of letter dated February 11, 2025, Dr. Richeline C. Joe, President of the Supreme Election Council of Curaçao (SEC) invited the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to send a technical team to observe the general elections in Curaçao which were held on March 21, 2025. In response, the Secretary-General of the CARICOM agreed to deploy a Caricom Election Observer Mission (CEOM) comprised of three persons.

The key objectives of the CEOM are to:

- 1) observe the entire election process in the host country, including observations of the general atmosphere and environmental conditions under which the election is being conducted; the activities at the polling stations on the day of the election; the counting and tabulation of votes after the closing of the polls; and the political climate after the announcement of the results;
- 2) collect qualitative and quantitative data regarding the entire election process including the general administration of the election by the election officials, and the conduct of stakeholders such as political actors, civil society stakeholders, the media, and the voting public at large; and
- 3) identify any areas of weakness and make the appropriate and timely recommendations as needed.

In pursuit of these objectives, the CEOM team, prior to election day, held several meetings with the SEC, first to gain a comprehensive understanding as to the extent of the preparations for election day, and to assess their expectations with respect to any anticipated difficulties on election day. In addition, the SEC arranged official meetings with high-ranking government leaders, as well as the opportunity to meet and greet other stakeholder groups and civil society. Having concluded the meetings, it was clear that the SEC was more than reasonably prepared for the conduct of the election. In addition, there was consensus among the groups that the general environment, though filled with anticipation, was generally calm, and as a result the leaders and the groups we spoke with expected that the election would take place without any major issues or incidences of concern.

On election day, the CEOM team started its observations at the World Trade Centre in Willemstad, which was used as the centre for the distribution and deployment of all the polling station materials and personnel, including the police and security services. This process went relatively smoothly, and the various groups were dispatched on time to their respective polling stations. We continued our observations by attending three polling stations half an hour prior to the opening of the polls. We observed that the pre-opening procedures were adequately followed and that the polling stations opened on time. From media reports, all the polling stations opened on time, save for one in which access to the building was inadvertently delayed. Access was eventually granted, and the polling station opened. Throughout the remainder of polling day, the CEOM team observed the voting process at 23 polling stations out of 107, at which approximately 23% of the registered voters were slated to vote. Our observations also included the closing procedures and the counting of the votes at two of the 23 polling stations visited. The CEOM team also had the unique opportunity to observe the voting process in the polling station located at the Curaçao Centre for Correction and Detention.

Overall, our preliminary assessment is that the general election held in Curaçao on March 21, 2025, was conducted smoothly and without major incident, and the result thereof reflects the will of the people of Curaçao. The opening procedures, voting processes and closing and counting procedures observed were within the bounds of the published Rules and Procedures for parliamentary elections in Curaçao, and we report that they were no major areas of concern. The CEOM team will prepare a full report for submission to the Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Her Excellency Carla Barnett, which will include our recommendations for the conduct of future elections in Curaçao.

The CEOM team congratulates the members and staff of the SEC led by Dr. Richeline C. Joe, for a successful election, and we hereby express our appreciation for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to the CEOM team, which contributed tremendously to the success of our mission.

MR. COREY C. GREENIDGE
CHIEF OF MISSION
CARICOM Election Observation Mission
CURAÇAO
MARCH 22, 2025