

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

We formed our Conclusions and Recommendations while examining most aspects of the election process during the Solomon Islands National Parliamentary elections in accordance with our terms of reference, which state, *inter alia*, that the Group “would ... be free to propose to the authorities concerned such action on institutional, procedural and other matters as would assist the holding of such elections.”

Conclusions

- The people of Solomon Islands should be congratulated for the orderly and disciplined manner in which they conducted themselves on polling day.
- While in most instances the secrecy of the ballot was assured, this was compromised in certain areas by the inadequacy of voting arrangements.
- The arrangements for provision of materials and staff for polling stations were adequate.
- The procedures were generally understood and followed with some exceptions.
- Election officers were co-operative, helpful and willing to share information.
- Voter education and awareness seemed adequate.
- The count was thorough and transparent although the counting process was excessively slow.
- The presence of international observers was well received by the Electoral Commission, political parties and the voters.
- In some places where we observed, there was some measure of intimidation of voters by the presence of special (armed) constables.
- Presiding Officers had no means of communication with the Electoral Commission.

We also note that:

- Prior to polling day, there were serious doubts about the adequacy and credibility of the voters' list, which will only be dispelled following a new registration exercise.
- We saw very few women engaged at a senior level in the management of the elections.
- There were very few women candidates and the sole female MP in the last Parliament was defeated. As a result, there will be no women in the new Parliament.
- Provisions for the incapacitated were inadequate and accessibility in some cases very difficult, if not impossible.

Recommendations

- The Electoral Law should be reviewed.
- A review of the use of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) should be undertaken to avoid abuse of the advantages of incumbency.
- More encouragement and support should be given to women to stand for election and to participate in the political life of the country.

- While police officers exercised their responsibilities discreetly, the numbers of police deployed at some polling stations were excessive.
- Arrangements for the speedier transportation of ballot boxes to counting centres should be improved.
- The administration of birth and death certificates should be improved to help to ensure the integrity of the voters' list.
- Separate voting arrangements should be made to ensure voting by the disciplined and essential services if they are not registered to vote in the constituency where they are deployed.
- The establishment of a permanent Electoral Office would facilitate continuous registration of voters.
- A Supplementary List should be issued to ensure late registration of voters.
- The period for Claims and Objections should be extended.
- The use of symbols should be reviewed.
- Consideration should be given to the future integration of the Electoral Commission with the Constituency Boundaries Commission; pending this the Electoral Commissioner should be made an *ex officio* member of the Constituency Boundaries Commission.
- A review of the number and boundaries of constituencies should be undertaken as soon as possible.
- Campaign Policy guidelines should be introduced to prevent campaigning right up to the day of poll.
- Media campaign should be provided free by the state on the basis of equal time allocation.
- A method of accounting for campaign expenditure should be devised and enforced.
- A voter's card should be issued to each voter bearing the name of the polling station, the voter's name and registration number to reduce the problems now encountered by Presiding Officers in identifying the voter on the electoral register.
- We recommend that serious consideration should be given to the provision of a single ballot box with ballot papers listing candidates which voters must mark against the candidate of their choice.