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## **Statement of the OAS Electoral Observation Mission to the March 2 General and Regional Elections in Guyana**

The Chief of the Electoral Observation Mission of the Organization of American States (OAS) to the March 2 General and Regional Elections in Guyana, former Prime Minister of Jamaica, Bruce Golding, remains concerned that, after more than six weeks, an accurate and credible result that would allow a duly elected government to assume office has not been determined. This is especially regrettable in light of the global health crisis that requires every government to take decisive actions and to be able to command the confidence of its people in order to mobilize them in thwarting the spread of the Coronavirus.

The political crisis in Guyana is not intractable. As the Mission had previously noted – and to the credit of all the stakeholders, especially the voters themselves – the casting and counting of ballots on March 2 was conducted in a peaceful and transparent manner. All that remained was for the count from each polling station to be accurately tabulated and declared. There is an abundance of evidence that this was not done in the case of Region 4 and this has led to the decision for the ballots in all ten regions to be recounted.

The proposal by the Chief Elections Officer that would have required five months to recount less than 500,000 ballots is unheard of in any democracy and would be unacceptable under any circumstances. The Mission notes that the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) has ordered that a revised timetable be prepared.

The Mission urges GECOM to ensure that the procedures for the recount are transparent and consistent, that the instructions to election officials conducting the recount are unambiguous and based on the provisions of the relevant laws and that the public be fully informed of the methodology to be used.

In particular, the Mission requests GECOM take particular care to ensure that:

- the officials to be engaged in the recount are selected based on their impartiality and those who have displayed partisan behavior are excluded;
- the duly authorized representatives of political parties and accredited observers are allowed to see (but not handle) each ballot;
- the legal provisions for challenging the determination of ballots are fully respected;
- an ascertainment is made as to whether the number of ballots cast corresponds with the number of persons recorded as having voted;
- the result of the recount for each polling station is compared with the Statement of Poll signed by the Presiding Officer.

The Mission remains engaged to assist the people of Guyana in ensuring that their will prevails and that Guyana's position as an internationally respected democracy is restored and preserved.