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REPORT
ELECTORAL OBSERVER MISSION TO THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA
General elections of May 2, 1999

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ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

REPORT

ELECTORAL OBSERVER MISSION

TO THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA

General Elections of May 2, 1999

Unit for the Promotion of Democracy

ELECTION OBSERVER MISSION TO THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA

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I. INTRODUCTION

On September 16, 1998, the Minister of Foreign Relations for Panama, Dr. Jorge Eduardo Ritter D., wrote to the Secretary General of the OAS, Dr. Cesar Gaviria, advising him of the interest of the Elections Tribunal in inviting the Organization to send an Observer Mission for the general elections called for May 2, 1999.¹

On Oct. 16, 1998, the Secretary General wrote to the Panamanian foreign office, noting that under current provisions the sending of election observer missions is conditional upon obtaining external funding, but that he hoped to be able to negotiate such an arrangement.²

Communications were duly sent to representatives of the member states and the permanent observers, with a view to obtaining the necessary funding. In the end, the Mission received valuable support from the Government of the United States of America.

In December, the Panamanian authorities were advised that the Organization was in a position to send the requested Mission, and that the Secretary General had appointed Mr. Santiago Murray, Special Adviser to the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy, as Chief of Mission.

Subsequently, the Chief of Mission and his alternate made a preliminary visit to Panama, between January 25 and 28 1999, to hold initial coordination meetings with the electoral authorities and to begin organizational and logistic preparations for the Mission. On April 15, 1999, Ambassador Juan M. Pons, Alternate Representative of Panama, and the OAS Secretary General signed an agreement on privileges and communities required for the Mission to carry out its functions and responsibilities.

Mr. Eduardo Valdés Escoffery, President of the Elections Tribunal of Panama, and Mr. Santiago Murray, on behalf of the General Secretariat, signed an agreement on OAS Election Observer Mission Procedures on April 20, 1999.

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

1. Political subdivision

The territory of Panama is divided into nine provinces, 74 districts, and 587 *corregimientos* or municipalities³. There are four indigenous regions or *comarcas*: Kuna-Yala (ex-San Blas), Emberá (located in the province of Darién), Ngobe Buglé (located in part of the territory of the provinces of Bocas del Toro, Chiriquí and Veraguas) and Kuna de Madungandí (located in the province of Panamá).⁴

1 This note is included as Annex 1.

2 This note is included as Annex 2.

3 National Political Constitution (CP), art. 5. The country's population now stands at 2,809,285.

4 These were legally recognized for the elections of 1999. They have a total of 83,509 inhabitants who represent 4.78% of the voters' list. The territories of the *comarcas* cover 20% of the country's area. The Comarca of Emberá was created by Law 22 of 8 November, 1983, in territory split off from the Province of Darién and is divided into 2 districts, Sambú and Cémaco. The Comarca of Kuna de Madungandí was created

The following table lists the provinces, *comarcas* and districts and the number of municipalities in each province. 5

Province	Districts	No. Munci.
Bocas del Toro	(5). Changuinola, Bocas del Toro, Chiriquí Grande, Kankintú y Kusapín (the last two located in the indigenous Comarca of Ngobé-Buglé)	30
Coclé	(6). Penonomé, Antón, La Pintada, Natá, Olá, Aguadulce	41
Colón	(5). Colón, Chagres, Donoso, Portobello, Santa Isabel	40
Chiriquí	(17). David, Barú, Bugaba, Alanje, Boquerón, Renacimiento, Boquete, Dolega, Gualaca, Remedios, San Félix, San Lorenzo, Tolé. As well, the following districts belong to the indigenous Comarca of Ngobe-Bugle: Besiko, Mirono, Muña, and Nole Diuma	124
Darién	(4). Chepigana, Sambú, Pinogana, and Cémaco,	29
Herrera	(7). Chitré, Los Pozos, Parita, Pesé, Las Minas, Ocú and Santa María	45
Los Santos	(7). Las Tablas, Poci, Guararé, Los Santos, Macaracas, Pedasí and Tonosí	79
Panamá	(11). Arraijan, Capira, Chame, San Carlos, Balboa, Chepo, Chimán, Taboga, La Chorrera, San Miguelito and Capital	112
Veraguas	(12). Santiago, La Mesa, Sona, Calobré, Santa Fe, San Francisco, Atalaya, Montijo y Río de Jesús, Cañazas, Las Palmas, and Ñurum (this last district belongs to the Comarca Ngobé-Buglé)	98
Kuna-Yala (ex-San Blas)	(1) San Blas	4

by Law 24 of 12 January, 1996, in territories split off from the District of Chepo. By Law 10 of 7 March 1997 the Comarca of Ngobe Buglé was created, and 7 new districts and 22 municipalities were established, split off from the Provinces of Bocas del Toro, Chiriqui and Veraguas. Law 99 of 23 December 1998 gives the former *comarca* of San Blas its new name of Kuna Yala.
5?

2. Structure of government

Executive branch

The government is headed by the President of the Republic and Chief of State. For presidential elections, the entire national territory is treated as a single electoral riding or "circuit". The President is elected by direct popular majority vote, for a period of 5 years⁶. Two Vice Presidents are elected at the same time as the President. None of these persons may be re-elected for the same position in the two immediately following presidential terms.

Legislative branch

The legislature consists of a single chamber, the National Assembly, with 71 members elected by direct popular vote for a period of five years⁷. In the case of legislative elections, provinces and *comarcas* are divided, pursuant to the constitutional reform of 1983, into 40 electoral circuits⁸.

The following table lists the electoral circuits by province and indicates the total number of legislators elected in each province.

Province	No. of Electoral Circuits	No. of Legislators
Bocas del Toro	2 (circuits 1.1. and 1.2)	3
Coclé	4 (circuits 2.1. to 2.4.)	5
Colón	2 (circuits 3.1. and 3.2.)	5
Chiriquí	7 (circuits 4.1. to 4.7)	11
Darién	2 (circuits 5.1. and 5.2.)	2
Herrera	3 (circuits 6.1 to 6.3)	3
Los Santos	3 (circuits 7.1 to 7.3.)	3
Panamá	10 (circuits 8.1. to 8.10.) Circuitos 8.7 to 8.10. correspond to the capital district	31
Veraguas	5 (circuitos 9.1. to 9.5.)	6
Kuna Yala (Ex San Blas)	2 (circuitos 10.1 and 10.2)	2

6 CP arts. 170 and 172. In Panama, Presidents have been elected directly or indirectly at various times during the country's history. Between 1980 and 1916 election was indirect, through the designation of provincial electors who chose the President by relative majority. From 1920 until the overthrow of the Arnulfo Arias regime in 1968, election was by direct vote. Between 1972 and 1978, the system reverted to indirect election.

7 CP arts. 140 and 141. There are currently 72 members, because one legislator was recognized by virtue of the provisions in article 141 of the Constitution. See the section on voting for legislators on page... of this report.

8 Each electoral circuit has a maximum of 40,000 inhabitants and a minimum of 20,000, but electoral circuits can be created by law that exceed or fall short of these margins, in order to take account of current political divisions, territorial proximity, a concentration of the indigenous population, traditional links between neighboring areas, communication routes and historical and cultural factors, as basic criteria for grouping the population into electoral circuits.

Emberá		0
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Of the 40 electoral circuits, 26 are single-member, which means that, because of their small population, they elect only one legislator. In the 14 multiple circuits, between 2 and 6 legislators are elected (45 in total), depending on the population of the circuit:

- In 7 circuits, 2 legislators are elected (Bocas del Toro, Coclé, Chiriquí, Panama and Veraguas).
- In one circuit, 3 legislators are elected (Chiriquí).
- In 3 circuits, 4 legislators are elected (Colón and Panama).
- In 2 circuits, 5 legislators are elected (Panama).
- In one circuit, 6 legislators are elected (Panama).

The following table identifies the multiple circuits, by province and district, and the number of legislators elected in each of them.

Circuit	District	Province	No. of legislators
1.1.	Changuinola	Bocas del Toro	2
2.1.	Penonomé	Coclé	2
4.2.	Barú	Chiriquí	2
4.3.	Bugaba	Chiriquí	2
8.1.	Arrajan	Panamá	2
8.5.	La Chorrera	Panamá	2
9.1.	Santiago	Veraguas	2
4.1.	David	Chiriquí	3
3.1.	Colón	Colón	4
8.7.	Capital (Chorrillo, San Felipe, Calidonia and Curundú)	Panamá	4
8.8.	Capital (Bella Vista, Ancón, El Cangrejo, Pueblo Nuevo and Bethania)	Panamá	4
8.9.	Capital (San Francisco, Parque Lefevre and Juan Díaz)	Panamá	5
8.10.	Capital (Alcalde Díaz, Las Cumbres, Chilibri, Pedregal, Tocumen and Pacora)	Panamá	5
8.6.	San Miguelito	Panamá	6

Judicial branch

The Supreme Court of Justice and the lower courts make up the judicial branch. Members of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President.⁹

⁹ CP art. 199

Local government

Provincial Governors are appointed by the President.¹⁰

The mayors, the heads of municipal administration in each district, are elected by direct popular vote for period of five years¹¹. In elections of this kind, Panamanian law allows participation by independent candidates without party affiliation.¹²

Each municipality elects one representative for a period of five years¹³. Voting is direct and follows the proportional representation system used in electing legislators in multiple circuits. Representatives of the municipalities are members of the Communal Juntas in their respective jurisdictions. In addition, at the district and provincial level they are members of the Municipal and Provincial Councils, respectively¹⁴. For elections of this kind Panamanian law allows the participation of independent candidates without party affiliation. In districts with fewer than five municipalities the required number of councilors are elected so that the membership of the municipal council is never lower than five.¹⁵

Deputies to the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN)

By Law 2 of May 16, 1994, Panama ratified the Treaty Constituting the Central American Parliament, and the electoral code of 1997 includes provisions for election of its 20 deputies, and their respective alternates. Consequently, for the first time in 1999 elections were held for representatives of Panama to this regional legislative body, on the basis of votes cast for political parties in the presidential election, using the proportional representation system, with closed lists.¹⁶

10 CP art. 329

11 CP art. 238

12 Independent candidates must register supporters of their candidacy in the records of the Elections Tribunal. The minimum number of supporters required is 5% of voters in the respective jurisdiction. This same rule applies to independent candidates standing for election as municipal representatives or councilors.

13 CP art. 222. Municipal representatives may be re-elected indefinitely.

14 CP arts. 222, 234, 247, 234, 251, 286-290..

15 On May 2, 7 Councilors were elected: 2 in the districts of Cemaco and Sambu (Darién), 3 in the districts of Taboga and Panama, circuits 8.8 and 8.9 (Panama), and 2 in the district of San Blas (Kuna-Yala, ex-San Blas).

16 CP art. 322.

3. Electoral authorities

The Elections Tribunal is an independent body with its own legal personality, established for the purpose of guaranteeing the freedom, honesty and effectiveness of the popular vote. It consists of three magistrates appointed for a period of 10 years. It has jurisdiction over the entire Republic, in interpreting and enforcing the elections law and in directing and supervising the various phases of the electoral process. Decisions of the Elections Tribunal can be appealed only to the Tribunal itself, and when duly confirmed are definitive, irrevocable and binding (with the exception of recourse for unconstitutionality). The magistrates of the Elections Tribunal are responsible to the Supreme Court of Justice for errors or omissions committed in the exercise of their duties.

The Elections Supervisory Office [*Fiscalía Electoral*] is an independent agency that is an adjunct to the Elections Tribunal, the principal functions of which are to safeguard the political rights of the citizenry, to oversee the conduct of public officials with respect to political and election rights and duties, and to prosecute electoral crimes and violations.¹⁷

The electoral corporations are temporary bodies that carry out functions relative to the electoral process¹⁸:

- 1 National Elections Junta (with jurisdiction over the entire Republic).
- 40 Circuit Elections Juntas (with jurisdiction in their respective circuit).
- 74 District Elections Juntas (with jurisdiction in their respective district)
- 587 Communal Juntas (with jurisdiction in their respective municipality)
- Polling stations (with jurisdiction in their own precinct).

The elections corporations are composed of members selected by the Tribunal (President, Secretary and Rapporteur) with right to speak and to vote. They take their decisions by majority vote. Duly accredited representatives of the political parties are also members of these corporations, with the right to speak only.

In addition, there are the electoral delegates, a body of volunteers (510 persons), without political affiliation, who fulfill the duty of ensuring the amicable settlement of disputes that may arise during the electoral process.¹⁹ According to the

¹⁷ CP arts. 136 to 139; CE, arts. 114 to 121.

¹⁸ CE Chapter 2 (1), arts. 120 and ff; General Election Regulations (REG), approved 23 November, 1998, arts. 7 to 21.

¹⁹ An electoral delegate system has been functioning successfully in Costa Rica since 1948. In light of this precedent, the institution was introduced in Panama by the referendum of 1992 (Law 22 of 30 October 1992). At that time, the delegated bodies consisted of 200 citizens, while in 1994 the number was increased to 400. Currently, membership of the National Steering Board is made up of: Fausto Fernández, Lisandro Madrid, Rossina Ciniglio, Ricardo McPherson, Angel Baños, Manuel Vázquez and George Brathwaite. The National

regulations governing their activities, delegates may be freely appointed and removed by the Elections Tribunal, and act in an *ad honorem* capacity.

4. Political rights

Political rights and the capacity to discharge public office are reserved to Panamanian citizens. A citizen is defined as any Panamanian who has attained 18 years of age.²⁰ The franchise is a right and a duty of all citizens. Voting is free, equal, universal, secret and direct. The requirements for voting are: to be a Panamanian citizen, to be in full possession of one's civil and political rights, to present an identity card (even if expired) and to be registered on the voters' list²¹.

Voters' list²²

For the election of May 2, 1999, there were 1,746,894 citizens registered on the voters' list.

Distribution of the voters' list by age was as follows:

Age	Voters
18 to 22	188,167
23 to 27	247,264
28 to 32	224,570
33 to 37	199,295
38 to 42	163,395
43 to 54	288,836
55 to 61	110,919
62 to 69	92,156
70 to 79	78,240
80 to 89	26,028
over 90	27,623

The following table indicates projections for 1999 of the percentage of a females among the voting population, by province and *comarca*:²³

Province/Com	Porcentage
--------------	------------

Advisory Board consists of: Icela Constantino, Roberto Lombana, Manning Suárez and Flavio Méndez.

Within this structure there are delegates at the national, provincial and district level.

²⁰ CP art. 236

²¹ CP art. 125. Elections Code (CE) arts. 1 and 5. REG. Arts. 1 and 2.

²² Following are data on the voters' list and the voter participation rate in the last five general elections: 1972: 595,737 voters and 89.2% participation; 1978: 787,251 and 83.6%; 1984: 917,677 and 90.0%; 1989: 1,186,754 and 73.5%; 1994: 1,499,451 and 73%.

²³With respect to female suffrage, it should be noted that the 1946 Constitution enshrined equality of political rights between men and women. While Law 98 of 5 July 1941 granted the franchise to Panamanian women over 21 years of age, it did so only for those who had at least a secondary school diploma, and only for elections to provincial councils.

arca	
Bocas del Toro	45.1%
Colché	48.6%
Colón	50.2%
Chiriquí	51.0%
Darién	42.5%
Herrera	49.0%
Los Santos	48.6%
Panamá	51.6%
Veraguas	46.2%
Kuna-Yala (ex-San Blas)	56.0%
Emberá	47.3%
Total	50.3%

5. The election process

Pursuant to article 181 of the Elections Code and decree No. 59 of 23 November 1998, the Elections Tribunal called general elections to elect the President and Vice Presidents of the Republic, 20 deputies to the Central American Parliament, 71 legislators in 40 electoral circuits, 74 mayors in an equal number of districts, 587 representatives of municipalities, and 7 councilors.²⁴

Following are details on the rules governing various aspects of the elections process:

Advertising and insignia²⁵

Political propaganda at public meetings or by use of loud speakers and the communications media is allowed until 48 hours prior to voting, i.e. until midnight on April 30, 1999. Nonetheless, citizens may on election day use symbols or costumes relating to political parties or candidates, provided they do not bear the name of the Elections Tribunal.

Ban on alcohol and weapons²⁶

From midnight on Saturday, May 1, until midnight on Monday, May 3, 1999, the sale of alcoholic beverages was prohibited. In addition, the law prohibits civilians from bearing arms on election day.

²⁴ The number of popularly elected positions totaled 1,666, including alternates (2 for President, 1 for each deputy to PARLACEN, 2 for each legislator, 2 for each mayor, 1 for each municipal representative and councilor).

²⁵ CE, arts. 248-249; REG, arts. 22 and 23.

²⁶ CE, arts 244-246; REG, art. 24. At the 1994 elections, 5,310 polling stations were installed, distributed among 1,980 voting centers.

Opinion polls²⁷

Polls may be published, provided a technical description is registered in advance with the Elections Tribunal. In accordance with prevailing regulations, such polls may be published or disseminated until 22 April 1999. With respect to voting booth exit polls, these may only be released after 7 p.m. on election day.

Installation of polling stations [*mesas*]²⁸

Polling stations (a total of 5,868 stations in 2,080 voting centers) must be installed by 6 a.m., and must operate without interruption until votes are counted and the results are reported to the Elections Tribunal and to the respective election juntas.

Voting ballots²⁹

A single voting ballot is used for each popularly elected position. The ballot includes squares or boxes, one for each party registered. In each of these boxes there is the symbol and the name of the political party (or the colors of a candidate who has no party affiliation), with the names of the candidates and their alternates. Only the presidential ballot includes photographs of the candidates. On the back of the ballot is a space where the two principal officials of the polling station are to place their signatures.

Voting³⁰

Voting takes place from 7 a.m. until 4 p.m., but citizens who are still waiting in line to vote at that time are allowed to do so. The law allows for priority in voting, i.e. without having to line up, for candidates (who must present identification to this effect), pregnant women, handicapped or sick voters, people older than 60, journalists and election officials and members of the security forces who are on duty on election day.

The law provides that in the case of elections where only one candidate is to be selected (President, legislators in single-member circuits, mayors and municipal representatives), the voter (in order not to spoil his ballot) must mark his preference in the box for only one party, regardless of whether the same candidate may be standing for another party or parties. On the other hand, in elections for multiple circuits (legislators and councilors), the voter may vote for the entire slate (marking the box of a party) or select one or more candidates from the list (selective voting).

The Tribunal ordered the installation of 16 voting stations (with a total of 7,276 voters), distributed among 9 pilot centers (1 for each province), where the option of electronic voting was to be provided.³¹

²⁷ CE, art. 248; REG, art. 27.

²⁸ CE, art. 239; REG, art. 34.

²⁹ CE, arts. 233-238; REG, art. 24.

³⁰ CE, arts. 251-252; REG, arts. 31 and 37.

Counting of votes³²

Panama's elections legislation requires that the counting of votes be divided into partial and general tallies. Partial tallies are done at the voting stations. General tallies are done by the juntas, depending on the type of elections.

The partial tally at the voting stations is done separately and in the following order:

- President.
- Legislators.
- Mayors.
- Municipal representatives.
- Councilors (only in the districts of Taboga, Cemaco and Sambu).

The counting of votes for deputies to PARLACEN is done, not at the voting station, but by the National Elections Junta.

The general vote tally, which is the responsibility of the juntas, consists of compiling the tally reports from the voting stations or from other juntas, in order to establish results for the respective jurisdiction.³³

The National Elections Junta (JNE) proclaims as President and Vice President those candidates who have obtained the greatest number of votes.³⁴

When counting is concluded, the JNE assigns seats for the PARLACEN. Parties may participate in this procedure if they have won at least 5% of valid votes cast in the presidential election.³⁵

The circuit juntas, after reviewing the tally reports for the presidential elections and transmitting the returns to the JNE, begin the process of awarding seats to legislators³⁶. The district juntas are responsible for proclaiming mayors and councilors.

31 As indicated on page 21, this procedure has been canceled. It should be noted that the first experiment with electronic voting in Panama was during the 1992 referendum, when 6 voting machines were used

32 CE, arts. 264 to 294; REG, art. 39.

33 CE, arts. ; REG, art. 52

34 When the same candidate is sponsored by two or more parties, the total of votes obtained for him by all parties is calculated.

35 The procedure is as follows: the percentage of votes obtained by each party is divided by a fixed quotient (5) and the result indicates the number of seats that will go to that party. If at the end of this first round there are still vacant seats, one seat is awarded to the party with the most votes among those that did not received a seat in the first round. If there are still seats left to be awarded, they will be assigned, one per party, among those obtaining the most votes.

36 In single-seat circuits the votes for parties and candidates are totaled and the winner (legislator) is the person who has obtained the greatest number of votes in the circuit. In multiple circuits, positions are distributed in two ways: among the parties, on the basis of quotient and half-quotient formulas, under the proportional representation system, and among candidates, on the basis of the residual formula, under the simple majority system. The quotient is determined by dividing the number of seats to be filled by the total number of valid votes cast in the election for legislators. The half-quotient, as its name implies, is this quotient divided by two. The allocation of seats is done in the following manner: the total number of

In the case of mayors, the candidate who obtains the greatest number of votes is proclaimed. If there are several parties sponsoring the same candidate, the votes are totaled. Councilors are proclaimed using the procedure for proclaiming legislators in multiple circuits.

The communal juntas are responsible for proclaiming municipal representatives, on the basis of the greatest number of votes obtained.

Unofficial transmission of results (TER)

The Elections Tribunal has the power to announce partial and preliminary results of the election.

Guarantees offered by the Elections Tribunal:

- Awareness and training campaigns aimed at the general public, and at representatives of political parties and polling station officers in particular. These activities were initiated in October 1997. In addition, a video was distributed showing how the voting stations operate and explaining the new instructions for the polling station officials, in particular with respect to the election of representatives in multiple circuits.
- Lists of all members of voting stations and elections juntas were delivered to the political parties 12 months before the elections. According to information provided by the TE, 85% of the members were not registered in any political movement.³⁷
- It was only in April that more than 40,000 identity cards were issued, of which 10,000 were issued on the last day for applying for them.
- On Nov. 2, 1997, the political parties were sent the preliminary voters' list so that they could file any challenges. The final national voters' list, by province, municipality, voting center and polling station, was delivered in February 1999, in both electronic and hard copy format, for consultation as necessary.

votes obtained by each party is divided by the electoral quotient. The result indicates the number of seats that must be assigned to each party. Proclamation of winners by quotient is done on the basis of the candidate with the most votes within the respective party. If there are still positions to be filled, they are allocated among the parties that did not receive seats in the first round, but that reached the half-quotient figure. The proclamation of winners by half-quotient is done on the basis of the candidate who receives the most votes within each party. If there are still seats left vacant they are awarded, not by party, but to the candidates with the most votes. This residual distribution involves counting the votes obtained by each candidate in all lists in which he has been sponsored, regardless of what party he belongs to. The residual procedure is also applied when no party achieves the quotient or half-quotient. It must be remembered that, pursuant to the Constitution (article 141), political parties that have won enough votes to exceed the 5% threshold, but that have not elected a legislator in any electoral circuit, have the right to be awarded a seat. This will be awarded to the candidate who obtains the greatest number of votes for legislator, within his party. This legislator is referred to, in political jargon, as the "Lone Ranger".

³⁷ In the 1994 election this percentage was 35%.

- Standing consultation between the Tribunal and the National Council of Political Parties. This body, created in 1997, provides advice on all matters that the electoral body submits for its consideration.
- Recognition of political parties' right to have representatives on all electoral corporations: one principal and one alternate member at each tally center, and one principal and two alternate members on the National Elections Junta and on the circuit juntas.
- Accreditation of national and international observers.³⁸
- Presence of the Electoral Delegates Corps, consisting of volunteers from across the country who serve as mediators in settling disputes on voting day
- Presence of political parties at voting stations to verify the sealing of the files at the time of recording of the unofficial returns from the polling stations begins.
- The President of the Republic, in a move to guarantee voting transparency and freedom, issued an order on April 26 1999 giving the Elections Tribunal power over the National Police, National Air Service, National Marine Service and the institutional protection system.
- The Attorney General placed the Technical Judicial Police at the disposal of the Elections Tribunal, as well as the offices of the district attorneys, to receive any complaints about conduct of the elections.
- Swift transmission of unofficial returns by the Tribunal³⁹. As well, the headquarters of the three political party alliances were connected to the TE computer system so that they could consult the unofficial returns.

III. POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

The international community had high expectations in observing the Panamanian elections. In the first place, because this was the last general election of the century,

³⁸ In addition to the OAS, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) accredited 20 international observers. The Justice and Peace Commission accredited 1700 national observers. As well, the Tribunal invited colleagues from other electoral bodies, hemispheric representatives and representatives of the diplomatic corps accredited to Panama.

³⁹ Pursuant to legislation, official results are proclaimed by the National Elections Junta. Nevertheless, the Tribunal is empowered to release unofficial returns, known as TER. On the day preceding the vote, the three political alliances gave a formal commitment not to release partial returns or make any proclamations without prior authorization from the Tribunal, until such time as unofficial results allowed to Tribunal to identify a clear trend in the voting.

and was only the second election to be called since the overthrow of the regime of ex-General Manuel Antonio Noriega in 1989⁴⁰. Secondly, in light of the responsibilities that the future President-elect would have with respect to three events of undoubted historic importance: control and full administration over the Panama Canal, which the country is to take over at the end of this year⁴¹; the fact that the country is to serve as temporary headquarters for negotiations toward a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) during 2001, and the celebration of the centenary of independence in 2003.

1. Political parties

The Constitution provides that political parties are to express political pluralism and that they are essential mechanisms for political participation. The Elections Code regulates the recognition and existence of political parties. On the latter point, it provides that the number of votes that a party has to win in order for its existence to be recognized must not be set at a level higher than 5% of valid votes cast in elections for President, legislators or municipal representatives.⁴²

In accordance with the current elections law, 12 parties were formally constituted to participate in the general elections:⁴³

- Arnulfista
- Cambio Democrático
- Partido Demócrata Cristiano —PDC
- Liberal
- MOLIRENA
- Renovación Civilista
- Partido Revolucionario Democrático —PRD
- Solidaridad
- Papa Egoró
- Partido Nacional Popular —PNP
- MORENA
- Liberal Nacional

2. Political alliances⁴⁴:

⁴⁰ The election of 1999 was the 23rd since 1904, when the Constituent Assembly named Manuel Amador Guerrero as the country's first President.

⁴¹ In the governing proposals of the three candidates, the issue of administration of the Panama Canal was treated as a matter of State that should be removed from party politics.

⁴² CP, art. 132; CE, Title III (arts. 36 to 113).

⁴³ In the 1994 election there were 15 political parties.

⁴⁴ The last general elections were held in 1994. Fifteen parties competed at that time, and there were 7 candidates for President. The Alianza Pueblo Unido, made up of the PRD, PALA and LIBRE, sponsored Dr. Ernesto Pérez Balladares and won 34% of the votes. Alianza Demócrata, comprising the Arnulfista, PLA, Liberal and UDI parties, proposed Mireya Moscoso and won 29% of the votes. The Movimiento Papa Egoró put forward Rubén Blades and won 17%. The Alianza Cambio 94, consisting of MOLIRENA, MORENA and Renovación Civilista proposed Rubén Carles and won 16%. The Partido Demócrata Cristiano sponsored Eduardo Vallarino and won 2%. The Alianza Concertación

In accordance with electoral rules, three presidential candidates were elected in primary elections and were nominated by the party alliances as indicated below⁴⁵:

- Mireya Moscoso, for the Alianza Unión por Panamá (comprising Arnulfista, Molirena, Morena and Cambio Democrático).⁴⁶
- Martín Torrijos, for the Alianza Nueva Nación (comprising PRD, Liberal Nacional, Solidaridad and Papa Egoró).⁴⁷
- Alberto Vallarino, for the Alianza Acción Opositora (comprising PDC, Liberal, Renovación Civilista and PNP).⁴⁸

3. Opinion polls

Between November 1998 and February 1999, opinion polls showed the following percentages with respect to voter intentions:

Martín Torrijos:	40%
Mireya Moscoso:	28%
Alberto Vallarino:	10%

In the last days of the campaign however, local newspapers published contradictory survey results with respect to voting intentions for President. The percentages from two of those surveys are shown below⁴⁹:

Moscoso:	41.3%	Torrijos:	37.9%
Torrijos:	39.4%	Moscoso:	29.1%
Vallarino:	14.4%	Vallarino:	19.4%

Nacional, formed by Solidaridad and MUN, proposed Samuel Galindo and won 2%. The Panameñista Doctrinario party put forward José Muñoz, with 0%.

⁴⁵ Primary elections for presidential candidates were introduced into the Elections Code in the reforms approved in 1997. The first primary elections in the country were conducted by the Arnulfista party, with two candidates competing: Mireya Moscoso and Alberto Vallarino. The defeat of the latter candidate provoked a split in the party and Vallarino was put forward by the PDC as a candidate of the opposing Alianza Acción. It should be noted that the PRD decided on the primaries route to select all candidates for popularly elected positions. It put forward more than ten candidates for nomination to the presidency.

⁴⁶ Arturo Vallarino and Dominador Kaiser Bazán were the candidates for first and second Vice President, respectively

⁴⁷ They were accompanied on the ballot by Raúl Arango and Laurentino Cortizo as candidates for Vice President.

⁴⁸ The candidates for Vice President were Mayín Correa and Joaquín Franco.

⁴⁹ The first of these was conducted by Dichter & Neira and published by the newspaper La Prensa on April 22. The second was conducted by Guerrero Marketing Research SA and published the same day by the newspaper El Universal.

Following publication of these surveys, and in light particularly of estimated projections in the provinces with the most electoral clout, public opinion had the perception that the election would be hard-fought.

4. Political participation

As the following indicators of party affiliation show, there is a high degree of public involvement in Panamanian political life:

Political Parties	No. of members	Female members
PRD	374,156	50.83%
Arnulfista	94,478	41.60%
Liberal Nacional	73,444	41.79%
PDC	54,797	50.90%
Cambio Democrático	44,167	45.35%
MOLIRENA	39,793	47.43%
Solidaridad	37,658	48.66%
Liberal	42,004	36.83%
MORENA	22,690	49.63%
Papa Egoró	21,289	46.58%
Renovación Civilista	19,024	50.92%
PNP	8,526	058.29 %

With respect to female participation in Panamanian elections, according to statistics released by the Elections Tribunal, only 13% of the 14,174 candidates for the 1994 elections were women, although women account for 50.3% of the voters' list. It should be noted that the current article 196 of the Elections Code (following the reforms of 1997) guarantees a minimum of 30% for female participation in internal elections for popularly elected positions and for internal political party posts. In 1999, 166 positions were up for election, for which more than 16,000 candidates stood, and of whom 2,396 (15%) were women.

IV. WORK OF THE ELECTIONS OBSERVER MISSION

1. Structure and geographic distribution

The Mission conducted its work from April 20 to May 6 1999, and was composed of 35 international observers from 15 member states, and one observer from among the Permanent Observer countries⁵⁰.

Considering the availability of financial resources, the Mission's deployment around the country was designed with the dual purpose of covering remote areas that, in the view of political leaders, could present difficulties, and others that, because of population density, were particularly significant for the purposes of the Mission. In this respect, a Central Headquarters was established in the capital city and 8 regional headquarters offices were set up in Bocas del Toro, Coclé, Colón, Chiriquí, Darién, Herrera, Los Santos and Veraguas.

⁵⁰ Moisés Benamor, Jamileth Bermúdez, Lucila De La Puente, Silvia Dangond, María Delgado, Nelson Díaz, Alfredo Fischer, Crista Gándara, Roy García, Robert García, Javier González Olaechea, Luz Angela González, Oscar Guerra, Manuel Gutiérrez, Chris Hernández Roy, Amelia León, Judith Lobos, Senen Magariños, Kelly McBride, Rómulo Muñoz Arce, Santiago Murray (Chief of Mission), Guillermo Olave, Bernice Robertson, Gladys Salazar, Dominique Stervelick, Oscar Sánchez, René Saravia, Adam Smith, Andrés Talero, Jorge Tlatelpa, Cristina Tomassoni (Deputy Chief), Galo Torres, Carla Vaccarella (Logistics Coordinator), Luis Valdés and Ricardo Viteri.

2. Central Headquarters -- province of Panama

The Central Headquarters of the Mission was located in the capital city and was responsible for coordination and financial administration, including dealing with substantive issues and providing the human and logistic resources necessary for carrying out the Mission's work. This office, which was made up of the Chief of Mission, the Deputy Chief and the Logistics Coordinator, all officials of the OAS Unit for the Promotion of Democracy, was ably assisted by the director and officials of the Office of the General Secretariat in Panama. In addition, to permit monitoring of the election process throughout the province of Panama, seven international observers were assigned to the Headquarters office.

General information on the Province of Panama

The province of Panama, seat of the Capital District, is located in the eastern part of the isthmus. It has an area of 11,887.4 km²⁵¹ and population of 1,339,067. To the north it borders on the province of Colon and the *comarca* of Kuna Yala⁵²; to the south is the Pacific Ocean; to the east is the province of Darien and to the west the province of Coclé.

For electoral purposes, the province is divided into 10 electoral circuits, as shown below:

Electoral Circuits	Districts	No. de Municipalities
8-1	Arraiján	6
8-2	Capira	13
8-3	Chame	11
	San Carlos	9
8-4	Balboa	6
	Chepo	8
	Chimán	5
	Taboga	3
8-5	La Chorrera	18
8-6	San Miguelito	5
8-7	District of Panamá	5
8-8	District of Panamá	4
8-9	District of Panamá	4

⁵¹ With the exception of Darien, it is the largest province geographically

⁵² The *comarca* has 2,357.0 km². Some 40,000 indigenous people live in it, of whom half are registered voters. The *comarca* includes electoral circuits 10-1 and 10-2; 48 voting centers and 76 polling stations were set up for the election of 4 representatives and 2 legislators.

8-10	District of Panamá	6
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The province of Panama has 851,108 voters, accounting for 51% of the national voters' list. There were 404 voting centers and 2,590 polling stations. There were 10 election juntas. Voting was held for 103 representatives, 11 mayors and 31 legislators.

Observation activities prior to voting day

In the days preceding the vote, the Chief of Mission and his alternate paid a courtesy call on the Vice Minister of Foreign Relations of Panama, Dr. Edgar Spencer. In order to assess possible operations of the Mission, they also met on several occasions with Dr. Eduardo Valdés Escoffery (President) and Dr. Dennis Allen and Dr. Erasmo Pinilla (Magistrates) of the Elections Tribunal. As well, they interviewed and maintained frequent contact with Mr. Roberto Lombana, President of the National Elections Junta⁵³ and Dr. Gerardo Solis, the Supervisor of Elections.⁵⁴

They also requested an interview with Dr. José Dimas Cedeño, Metropolitan Archbishop of Panama, who because he was absent from the city delegated this interview to the Auxiliary Bishop of Panama, Fernando Torres Durán.

In order to gather information necessary for the Mission's work, interviews were arranged and conducted with representatives of political parties, nongovernmental organizations and the media. Similarly, the observers assigned to the various circuits in the province of Panama met with the authorities and representatives in each zone⁵⁵. A large majority of the political representatives interviewed by the observers declared their confidence in the election authorities and in the manner and method of organizing the

⁵³ At the first interview all the members of the National Elections Junta were present: : Ezra Zury Silvera, Camilo Alleyne, Narciso Arellano Moreno, Víctor Manuel Cucalón, Elsa Guanti de Rodríguez, César Escobar, Manuel Vásquez and Francisco Fog.

⁵⁴ In accordance with the Constitution, the Office of the Supervisor of Elections is an independent body responsible to the Tribunal. The Supervisor of Elections is appointed by the Executive, with the approval of the Assembly.

⁵⁵ **Alianza Acción Opositora:** Alberto Vallarino, Ricardo Arias Calderón, Guillermo Márquez Amado, Mayín Correa, Sandra Escorcía, Joaquín Franco, Maribel Cuervo de Paredes, José Alvarez Juan C. Varela, Mariela Jiménez, Julio Aizpirúa, Francisco Moisley.

Alianza Nueva Nación: Martín Torrijos, Raúl Arango, Laurentino Cortizo, Balbina Herrera, Gerardo González, Juan Carlos Navarro, Samuel Lewis Galindo Héctor Alemán, Ricardo de la Espriella, Aristides de Icaza, Roberto Abrego, Susana R. de Torrijos, Andrés Vega, Ramón Cardoze, Arturo Araúz.

Alianza Unión por Panamá: Mireya Moscoso, Joaquín Vallarino, Ricardo Martinelli, Guillermo Ford, Miguel A. Bernal, Juan Carlos Castulovich, José Miguel Alemán, Leopoldo Castillo, Valentín González, Abraham Barcenás, José M. Herrera, Joaquín Franco III, José M. Herrera Jr.

Comisión de Justicia y Paz: Stanley Muschett.

election process⁵⁶. It should be noted that the OAS Mission also held coordination meetings with national observers of the Justice and Peace Commission [*Comisión de Justicia y Paz*] and with other international observers, the IFES and the Embassy of the United States in Panama.

During the days leading up to the election, the observers visited the major storage centers for elections materials, and noted the great sense of responsibility and understanding of rules and duties with which the employees and managers went about their work. The Mission confirmed that at all those centers there was a satisfactory police presence. As well, they witnessed the successful simulation exercise that was conducted on April 25 by the JNE in order to demonstrate the functioning of the computerized tally system.

With respect to electronic voting, on April 27, 1999 the Tribunal issued a public notice of its decision "to cancel the use of electronic voting in the elections on May 2". The text of that notice explained that, in light of recent adjustments to the system, there was insufficient time to conduct all the required tests and audits and to make the logistical adjustments necessary. As a result, on election day authority was given to exhibit the voting equipment at certain voting centers so that people could become familiar with the system, but no votes were to be recorded in this way.⁵⁷

The observers attended the campaign wind-up activities of the three party alliances that were held in the Plaza 5 de Mayo in the center of Panama City. On all three occasions the event was well coordinated with the election authorities, and election volunteers and security forces were present. The events took place in a festive atmosphere, with heavy participation by party members and supporters from throughout the country, and they attracted broad media coverage⁵⁸.

It should be noted as well that the Mission attended the general wind-up of the 1999 election campaign, an initiative of the youth delegates of all political parties, which was supported by the Tribunal and the Corps of Volunteer Election Delegates, and represented a common gathering of the new generation of political movements.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ In the last three elections the results, although adverse to the government, were respected; the Mission nonetheless took note of certain isolated apprehensions as to a possible recurrence of the fraudulent practices that marred the elections of 1984, when the opposition lost by 1713 votes.

⁵⁷ A technical adviser to the Mission participated in meetings of the Voting System Audit Commission that was held from April 8 to 11, 1999. That commission was made up of members of the Tribunal, officials of the company responsible for the system, and technical representatives of the three alliances. The report presented by the Mission's adviser noted that the system met two fundamental objectives: eliminating spoiled ballots and reducing the time needed to count the votes. Nonetheless, the document also noted that the objective of guaranteeing transparency in the process could not be met solely through such a system (since there was no provision for producing a printout of the vote for verification by the voter), but would require the Audit Commission to arrange for verification measures to increase the level of confidence in the system.

⁵⁸ Closing events of the campaign were held on April 25 (Unión por Panamá), April 28 (Alianza Nueva Nación), and April 29 (Alianza Acción Opositora). As well, the observers were present at the closing events for various candidates for legislators and municipal representatives.

⁵⁹ This event was scheduled for 5 p.m. on April 30, in 50th Street in the city.

During the entire election campaign, confrontations and prosecutions were constantly discouraged by the Catholic Church and the Justice and Peace Commission. In this context, on the day before the boat, the Archbishop of Panama, Monseñor José Dimas Cedeño, held a mass for peace in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Santa Maria la Antigua. It was attended by the electoral authorities and by candidates and representatives of the three alliances, again reflecting the climate of tolerance and conciliation that was evident throughout the election process⁶⁰. Nonetheless, as was to be expected, the last days of the election campaign were marked by a rather tense atmosphere.⁶¹

Observation on voting day

Following are details on the Mission's basic comments relating to this phase of the electoral process. ⁶²

- In general, the polling stations were established on time by the persons designated, in the presence of party delegates, and with the necessary materials to conduct the voting. Nonetheless, the Mission noted that in municipality 8-1 the directors of the colleges or voting centers complained to the observers about the lack of lamps needed for counting the votes, a process that extended well into the night. The Mission reported this logistic difficulty to the Tribunal, and that body resolved the situation immediately.
- Conditions of security and access at the voting centers were good. The police and fire-fighting corps were present at each of the voting centers.
- Party delegates were treated properly and their credentials were duly registered.

⁶⁰ During the morning, the candidate Alberto Vallarino received the Archbishop and delivered to him his plan of government, requesting the Church to act as depository of the commitments he had made during the electoral campaign.

⁶¹ In this context should be noted that on April 21, certain unidentified individuals in various parts of the country bought up massive numbers (20,000 copies) of the newspaper La Prensa, which carried a survey favorable to Ms. Moscoso. The newspaper brought a complaint before the Elections Supervisor, charging that the issue had been seized to prevent public knowledge of the results of the survey. As well, according to declarations by candidate Moscoso, during the night of April 26 unknown individuals had fired weapons into the air in front of her home. Representatives of the Alianza Nueva Nación also complained to the Elections Supervisor about acts of violence against their supporters. Representatives of Acción Opositora complained to the Elections Tribunal of "dirty tricks" against presidential candidate Alberto Vallarino during the campaign. Several of the media published complaints about the use of state resources for campaign purposes and the hiring of experts in electoral fraud.

⁶² The number of voting centers visited in the electoral circuits was as follows: 8-1, 13 centers; 8-2, 15 centers; 8-3, 16 centers; 8-4, 10 centers; 8-5, 10 centers; 8-6, 5 centers; 8-7, all centers; 8-8, 4 centers; 8-9, 5 centers; and 8-10, 8 centers.

- Members of the polling stations performed their tasks with great efficiency. In all cases they showed themselves willing to help voters and to keep party representatives informed. Thanks to this attitude, and despite the heavy voter turnout, there were no long waiting lines.
- Given the efficient performance of members of the polling stations, we may conclude that they were well and properly trained.
- The electoral delegates performed their duties in an excellent manner.
- In advance of the release of the unofficial returns by the Tribunal, and in violation of prevailing legislation, a representative of the Alianza Nueva Nación announced that its candidate had virtually won the election.⁶³
- Tally reports for the mayoralty election in Panama City were missing for several hours.
- The JNE was formally established at 2 p.m. in the Salon la Huaca of the ATLAPA Convention Center, in order to count votes at the national level for President of the Republic and deputies to PARLACEN. With respect to the partial and general tallies, these were conducted in full conformity with prevailing legislation.

3. Bocas del Toro Provincial HQ

General information

This province is located with the Caribbean Sea to the north, the province of Chiriqui to the south, the Republic of Costa Rica to the west and the Province of Veraguas to the east. It has an area of 8,745 km² and a population of about 140,000. Its capital is Bocas del Toro.

The districts and municipalities that make up this province contain electoral circuits 1.1 and 1.2, as shown below:

Electoral Circuits	Districts	No. de Municipalities
1-1	Bocas del Toro	5
	Changuinola	5
1-2	CHIRIQUI GRANDE	5
	Kankintú *	7
	Kusapin*	7

(*) New districts created on 28 October 1998

⁶³ This action was immediately challenged by the Elections Supervisor and the Elections Tribunal

Observation prior to voting day

It is important to note, in the first place, that most of the population (approximately 65%) of the province is of indigenous origin and that several different ethnic groups, Ngobere, Buglé, Teribe, Talamanca and Kuna, retain their own particular characteristics, especially with respect to language and social organization.

Given the geographic size of the province and the difficulty of access to most of its communities, three observers were assigned to initiate contact and make visits from three operating basis: the city of Chiriqui Grande, the island of Bocas (Isla Colon) and the city of Changuinola.⁶⁴

To this end, the observers held meetings with representatives, leaders and candidates for elected positions in the province. During those meetings the Mission was able to exchange ideas and perspectives about the ongoing election campaign and about pre-electoral organization matters.

As well, permanent contact was maintained with the election authorities in the province, both with the provincial director and with the various inspectors posted around the region. These authorities showed themselves willing at all times to provide information and cooperation as requested by the observers. The Mission also communicated frequently with the network of electoral delegates.

It should also be noted that the Mission maintained close ties of cooperation with provincial representatives of the Justice and Peace Commission, which plays an important communications role in indigenous communities and villages⁶⁵.

The observers also made frequent contact with local media personnel, especially those of the local radio stations.

In the districts visited, the Mission noted the prominent display of posters and advertising material for the three party alliances, as well as for candidates for legislators, mayors and representatives in the province. Until the very last day of the

⁶⁴ Given these geographic features, observers had to travel to several areas of the province by river, using boats and motorized canoes. On Oct. 28, a visit was made to the district of Kankintu, which is located four hours distant from Chiriqui Grande. Access is by sea, river and a track, which must be traversed by foot. This district has 8 municipalities, 33 voting centers, 52 polling stations, for a total of 12,609 voters. The entire population is of indigenous origin (Ngobe-Bugle). During this visit interviews were held with the four candidates for mayor and several nominees for municipal representatives. Two days later, a visit was made to the district of Kusapin, which is three and a half hours from the island of Bocas, by sea. This district, with some very remote communities, has seven municipalities, 16 voting centers, 29 polling stations, and 7,291 voters. The entire population is of indigenous origin and speaks Ngobe-Bugle. Interviews were held with the six candidates for mayor and those for municipal representative. A meeting was held with local leaders of the Catholic Church who were serving as facilitators (translators) for institutional messages from the Elections Tribunal.

⁶⁵ In this province, the Commission is coordinated by the Augustinian Recollet Fathers, who have missions on the island of Bocas, in the city of Changuinola and in the district of Kankintu.

campaign there were public gatherings, caravans and significant advertising by radio, by means of which the various candidates put forward their plans and projects for government.

Political debate took place in a normal manner. Nevertheless, there was some defacing of electoral propaganda posted on walls and lampposts, and candidates traded accusations among themselves⁶⁶.

The only formal, written complaint received was presented during the meeting that the observer team held with candidates and political representatives in the district of Chiriqui Grande on April 27. At that meeting, four party leaders claimed that in several municipalities of the district government property had been used to manipulate the transport service in an effort to win favor for candidates of the governing party. As well, they declared that certain local authorities of the Elections Tribunal were not acting impartially, since they had failed to take any steps to resolve the situation. This complaint was transmitted to the Elections Coordinator for circuit 1.2, to the Electoral Delegate appointed for this circuit, to the Provincial Elections Director, the Provincial Elections Delegate and the district *personero* (ombudsman). On May 1, those authorities, with the support of the district *personero* and national police officers, seized vehicles belonging to the state that had been used for propaganda purposes. An interesting point to note is that, during this operation, a vehicle belonging to the Communal Junta was found to be driven by one of the representatives who, at that time, had denounced the improper use of state property.

⁶⁶ There were some complaints about unfair conditions during the election campaign, and it was claimed that the legislator for circuit 1.2 (PRD), who was seeking re-election for a third term, was making use of state resources. In circuit 1.1 there was a sharp confrontation between the two legislative candidates of the PRD.

Observation on election day

On election day the Mission visited 60% of accessible voting centers located in the districts of Chiriqui Grande, Kankintu, Changuinola and Bocas del Toro. A total of 32 voting centers and 102 polling stations were visited⁶⁷. The observers reported the following:

- The polling stations were established on time and were well organized. Election materials were found to be in order at all of the stations visited.
- Voting proceeded normally⁶⁸. Nevertheless, some of the voters from indigenous communities were found to be unfamiliar with voting procedures, which meant that the process was slow and there were several spoiled ballots.
- The security forces were present at all voting the centers visited.
- The electoral organization functioned well, in the presence of inspectors, supervisors and election delegates.
- There was widespread enthusiasm among the public. Most voters showed up at the polls between 8 a.m. and 12 noon.
- Vote counting was conducted in a normal manner. This was nevertheless a slow and tiring process for members of the polling stations, especially when it came to counting the ballots for legislator. Representatives of the various political organizations were on hand throughout the process of counting the votes.
- Vote counting procedures by the Circuit and District Juntas were conducted normally.

4. Coclé Provincial HQ

General information

Coclé is located on the Atlantic Ocean, and borders on the provinces of Panama, Colon, Veraguas and Herrera. It has an area of 4,927.3 km² and a population of 197,981. With respect to its geographic features, the district seats are in urban areas that are readily accessible. On the other hand, most of the municipalities are in rural areas, and some are in difficult mountainous terrain. Penonomé is the provincial capital.

⁶⁷ Of the 120 voting centers, 70 (58.33%) are inaccessible because they are located in remote mountain regions. Accessible voting centers thus represent only 41.66% of the total.

⁶⁸ The Mission remarked that indigenous communities attach remarkable importance to the election process.

The districts and municipalities that make up the province of Coclé are grouped into four electoral circuits:

Electoral Circuitss	Districts	No. of Municipalities
2-1	Penonomé	10
2-2	Antón	10
2-3	La Pintada	5
	Nata	5
	Olá	6
2-4	Aguadulce	5

The 122,431 voters, representing 7.01% of the total national voters' list, were distributed among 445 polling stations in 241 voting centers. Elections were held for five legislators, six mayors and 41 municipal representatives, and four juntas were responsible for counting votes.

Observation prior to election day

The four observers assigned to this province began their work by holding a series of working meetings with representatives of the Elections Tribunal, political candidates, observers from the Justice and Peace Commission, and the media. At those meetings, information was provided on the general objectives of the electoral Mission, and impressions about the local political situation were gathered.⁶⁹

In general, the views and opinions of the members and candidates of the different political parties interviewed reflected a high degree of confidence in the Elections Tribunal and the election officials. Similarly, people interviewed pointed to the

⁶⁹ In addition to Monseñor Ashley of the Comisión de Justicia y Paz, and Gira Arias (Coordinator of the Elections Tribunal) and Ricardo Flores (Provincial Coordinator of Electoral Delegates), the observers interviewed the following candidates and political party representatives: Héctor "Tito" Alvarez, (PLN); Manuel Gálvez Arrocha, (PLN); Alberto "Lalo" Sucre, (PLN); Guido Alberto Posada Samudio, (PRD); Noriel Salerno Esteves, (Solidaridad y PLN); Alcibiades "Chichito" López, (Movimiento Papá Egoro); Agustín "Cutí" González, (Partidos Arnulfista and RC); Victorino "Vikingo" Jiménez, (PL); Germán Guevara, (Partido Arnulfista); Enrique "Chino" Him, (PRD); Aristides Pérez, (PLN); Rufino E. "Tito" Medina, (PLN); José María Añino Agraza, (PLN); Omar Danilo Navarro, (MOLIRENA); Fabricio Solís, (Partido Arnulfista); José de la Cruz Herrera, (MOLIRENA); Constantino Castillo, (MOLIRENA and RC); Mery S. Morales, Coordinator (PRD); Juan Manuel Peralta Ríos, (Solidaridad and PLN); Dickson Rodríguez, Candidate (PRD and Movimiento Papá Egoro); Francisco J. Oviedo, (PL); José "Ché" Urrutia, (Partido Arnulfista and MORENA); Silverio Pérez Quiroz, (PL); Darío Fernández (PRD); Marcos Mariscal, (PRD); Iván Alvarado, (PRD); Jaime Raúl Quiroz (PRD); Ana Julia Perea (PRD); Reginaldo "Rayo" Rudy (PRD); Ricardo Fernández (PRD); Felipe Rodríguez Guardia (PRD); Mario A. Quiel, (PL); Isam D. Liao G. (PL); Oriana Díaz Celeño (PL); Deysi de Domínguez (PL); Zilma Medina Quirós (PL); Daniel Nieto (PLN); Guido del Rosario García Pérez (PL); Rolando Guillén (PRD, Solidaridad and Movimiento Papá Egoro); Bolívar Pariente (Partido Arnulfista and MORENA); Víctor González Atencio, (PLN). The observers gave interviews to TV Noticias Canal 2 and to radio stations Continente, Exitosa, Universal and Poderosa de Panamá.

determination of the Panamanian public to participate on election day, and so help to consolidate the values of representative democracy.

It should be noted that the observers received several oral complaints about the "buying" of votes and identity cards. In all cases the resulting investigation was negative, and no such deeds were proven.

Observers witnessed various local caravans with which the political campaigns were wound up. No abnormal situations were noted.

Finally, the observers witnessed the delivery of voting materials to members of the polling station, and noted the fact that they were delivered sufficiently in advance to the more remote areas.

Observation on election day

The group of observers conducted its activities in the six provincial districts, monitoring a total of 52 voting centers. They noted the following:

- The polling stations were established on time, and all members were present. No problems were detected with respect to the delivery of election materials. There was a significant presence of political party representatives, and voters came to the polls in large numbers from the early hours of the day. It was found, however, that in semi-urban and rural areas the performance of polling station members and political party representatives in carrying out their duties betrayed a certain lack of training.
- Generally speaking, the election proceeded calmly and party representatives took a prudent and amicable approach to resolving minor incidents. It should be noted, however, that during the course of election day one representative shadowed elderly voters and accompanied them as they cast their votes.
- There were isolated complaints to the effect that PRD activists were engaging in political propaganda at some voting centers. Electoral delegates took steps to address these situations.

5. Colon Provincial HQ

General information

Colon is located on the Caribbean Sea, and borders on the provinces of Veraguas, Coclé and Panama. It has an area of 4,890 km² and a population of 197,802. Its capital is the city of Colon.

The districts and municipalities of the province constitute circuits 3-1 and 3-2, as shown below:

Electoral Circuits	Districts	No. of Municipaliite s
3-1	Colón	14
3-2	Chagres	7
	Donoso	6
	Portobelo	5
	Santa Isabel	8

Colon has a total of 120,834 voters, representing 6.92% of the national voters' list. There were 106 voting centers, 382 polling stations and 2 counting juntas. Forty representatives, five mayors and five legislators were elected.⁷⁰

Observation prior to election day:

During the lead up to the election, the three observers held meetings with representatives, leaders and candidates for elective position in the province, government and electoral authorities, officials of the Catholic Church and representatives of the media.⁷¹

In the circuits of Colon province, the phase prior to voting bore all the features of a general election, in which candidates for representative, mayor and legislature did their best to attract voter support. Until the last day of the campaign there were public meetings and caravans in the city of Colon. Despite the occasional friction, rumors and a few heated arguments, there were no serious incidents in the lead-up to the election.

The observers took note, through the media, of a complaint against the Movimiento de Desempleados de Colon (MODESCO, a movement of the unemployed),

⁷⁰ For circuit 3-1 there were 141 candidates for the legislature registered, including principal and alternate candidates for the following parties: PRD, PDC, MOLIRENA, Arnulfista, Movimiento Papa Egoro, Renovación Civilista, Solidaridad, MORENA, PNP, Cambio Democrático y Partido Liberal Nacional. For circuit 3-2, 27 candidates for the Legislature were registered, including principal and alternate candidates, for the following parties: PRD, MOLIRENA, Arnulfista, Papa Egoro, Renovación Civilista, Solidaridad, MORENA y Cambio Democrático. For the district of Colon, 12 candidates for mayor were registered, 11 of them running for political parties and one independent candidate. For the district of Chagres, seven candidates for mayor were registered, six of whom were running for political parties and one independent. For the district of Donoso, 4 candidates were running for political parties. For mayor of the district of Portobelo, there were 4 candidates for political parties and one independent candidate. For mayor of the district of Santa Isabel, there were seven candidates for political parties. For municipal representatives in the entire province of Colon there were a total of 629 candidates (principal and alternate) registered by political parties or running independently.

⁷¹ At the close of the provincial campaign, the observers took the opportunity to speak with presidential candidates Martin Torrijos and Alberto Vallarino. At the office of the governor of Colon, the observers interviewed several candidates for legislature from across the province. They also met with the mayoralty candidates for Colon. In other districts interviews with candidates for mayor and representatives were held in the respective district seats. It should be noted that the interviews given to the media (press, radio, television) helped to publicize the objectives and activities of the OAS Mission in the province.

who were accused of preparing to sabotage voting by cutting off the electricity supply. The OAS Chief of Mission formally requested intervention by the Supervisor of Elections⁷².

Observation on election day:

On election day the observers split into three groups and visited 80% of the voting centers located in circuit 3-1. The Mission was also present at the counting of votes by the Circuit Junta for circuit 3-1. The observers reported as follows:

- The process of establishing, opening and operating the voting stations was conducted in conformity with legal requirements at all stations observed. No activity was noted that might have compromised the transparency of the electoral process.
- In the great majority of voting stations observed, the six members were on hand at the beginning of voting. Representatives of the political parties were also present at the voting stations.
- No significant shortage of voting materials was noted.
- In all voting centers there was a police presence. In the city of Colon there were a few minor conflicts at two voting centers, which were handled appropriately and professionally by the police
- The public determination to vote was clear, and there was a heavy turnout of voters.
- All the voting stations observed closed at the hour stipulated. People who were still waiting in line at 4 p.m. were allowed to vote, and members of the voting stations and party representatives cast their vote subsequently. The counting of votes and the preparation of the reports was done transparently. In the city of Colon, the counting of the votes was delayed, but there were no abnormalities noted. A few candidates nevertheless registered complaints.
- The logistical organization by the Elections Tribunal was excellent. The group of observers enjoyed the constant collaboration of the local government authorities, electoral officials and representatives of the political parties.

6. Chiriqui Provincial HQ

The province of Chiriqui is located in the extreme western portion of the country, and is bordered to the north by the province of Bocas del Toro, to the east by Costa Rica, to the west by the province of Veraguas, and to the south by the Pacific Ocean. Its

⁷² See Annex III

varied topography ranges from the highest mountain peaks in the country (Baru volcano) to the Pacific shoreline. It is 6,570.8 km² in area (of which 2,127.4 belongs to the indigenous *comarca*) and it has a population of 428,371. Its capital city is David.

The province of Chiriqui is divided into seven electoral circuits, with 17 districts including 125 municipalities⁷³.

Electoral Circuits	Districts	No. of Municipalities
4-1	David	10
4-2	Barú	5
4-3	Bugaba	13
4-4 ⁷⁴	Nole Duima	5
	Muna	12
	Mirono	8
	Besiko	8
4-5	Alanje	7
	Boquerón	8
	Renacimiento	6
4-6	Boquete	6
	Dolega	7
	Gualaca	5
4-7	Remedios	5
	San Lorenzo	5
	San Félix	5
	Tolé	9

Chiriqui has a total of 265,117 registered voters (15.17% of the national voters' list). There are 393 voting centers, 908 polling stations and 7 election juntas. Voting was conducted for 124 representatives, 17 mayors and 11 legislators.

Observation prior to voting day.

The observers made contact with the provincial, district and communal authorities and with those responsible for organizing the elections process, including members of the Justice and Peace Commission⁷⁵. Agreements of coordination and

⁷³ The Mission visited all circuits and districts accessible by road, and took helicopters to a few inaccessible sites in the *comarca* of Ngobe-Bugle (Circuit 4-4), to witness the distribution of materials and elections personnel.

⁷⁴ Circuito 4-4 corresponds to the indigenous Comarca of Ngobe-Bugle.

* See annex IV.

⁷⁵ Government Authorities: **José Pretel, Jesús Arlencio, Ismael Rovira, Juan Quintero, Clemente Vargas, Miriam Rodríguez and Alberto Valdés.**

support were signed with observers of the Justice and Peace Commission and the IFES, so as not to duplicate efforts, and standing channels of communication were established for sharing information. As well, meetings were held with candidates and party leaders at the provincial, district and communal level, which allowed the observers to gather testimony and hear concerns with respect to the following circumstances:

- Possibilities for conflict in circuits 4-276 and 4-477.
- Excessive delay in delivering credentials to party representatives in much of circuit 4-2, district of Baru (Puerto Armless), and in all of circuit 4-4, *comarca* Ngobe-Bugle.
- Submission of a complaint relating to the double issuance of credentials for some political party representatives⁷⁸.
- The wind-up of provincial campaigns in the district capital, as well as caravans and multi-party public meetings, were conducted without major problems.

Observation on election day

The observers split into four groups, covering all electoral circuits: the OAS was able thereby to establish a presence in seven circuits, 14 districts and 38 municipalities, visiting a total of 62 voting centers and 237 polling stations. The principal observation findings are as follows:

- The process of installing and opening the polling stations was conducted entirely in conformity with the law. Certain anomalies noted at the outset, for example in processing poll-opening reports, did not detract from the transparency of the electoral process.

Election Authorities: **Arturo Murillo, Héctor Alvarez, Rufino Mujica, Stayiles Pitti, Ilya de Marrone, Elanis Montenegro, Ximena Lescure, Roberto Yoe, Luis Somoza and Emil Fuentes, Elias Sanjur, Mitzela de Catizo, Marcelo Sánchez and Edwin Fuentes.**

Church Authorities: **P. Misés Madrid, Carlos Solanos and Josó Laín**

Comisión de Justicia y Paz: **Josó Orí, Micaela Guerra, Pedro Gaitán and Elsa de Cojides.**

Security Forces: **Francisco Saldaña.**

Alliances: Acción Opositora: **Darío Cortés.**

Nueva Nación: **Félix González, Manuel Blanco, Armando Arjona, Alberto Valdés, Santiago Juvane, César Aleyea.**

Unión por Panamá: Roberto Linares, Rodolfo Aguilera, Octavio Ossio, Alfredo Anai, Jasmine Cortés, Jorge Rosas, Arturo Castrillón

76 An area with large banana plantations and serious labor strife.

77 The problems in this circuit were related to the lack of proper means of communication, since in some localities, accessible only by dirt road or by helicopter, personnel and election materials had to be distributed by air. In addition, since the area has no telephone lines, the TER had to be communicated manually. These circumstances led the observer team in Chiriqui province to reinforce their coverage of this region, in coordination with the IFES observers.

78 The text of this complaint is found in annex III.

- In most of the polling stations observed, all six members were in place when voting began. Nevertheless, there were delays in some of the more remote locations.
- In no case was there any significant shortage of election materials.⁷⁹
- Political parties were for the most part represented at the polling stations, although in a few cases there were difficulties with respect to lack of accreditation⁸⁰.
- There was a police presence at all voting centers. Nevertheless, at some of the centers with large numbers of polling stations, and thus a greater potential for conflict, the number of law enforcement officers on hand was insufficient to ensure voter security had there been any disturbance.
- Public eagerness to participate was clear in the heavy turnout of voters, from the early hours of the morning, except in the district of Tolé.
- There were complaints that some people were trying to "corral" elderly people or handicapped or blind voters as they deposited their ballots.
- All of the polling stations observed closed at the hour stipulated. All people who were waiting in line at 4 p.m. were allowed to vote, and the polling station members and party representatives cast their vote subsequently. The counting of votes and the preparation of returns was transparent. At no polling stations were any complaints received from party representatives.
- It should be noted that the logistical organization by the Elections Tribunal was very effective and that the group of observers enjoyed the full cooperation of local government authorities, electoral officials and political party representatives.

7. Darien provincial HQ

General information

Darien is located between the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean and borders on the province of Panama and the County of Kuna Yala. It has an area of 12,490.8 km² and a population of 63,436. Its capital is La Palma.

⁷⁹ It should be noted that the content of all pouches was verified province-wide several days before the election.

⁸⁰ In these cases, representatives observed the process from outside the station. There were no complaints registered on this score.

For electoral purposes the province is divided into two circuits:

Electora lCircuits	Districts	No. of Municipalitie s
5-1	Chepigana Sambú	16 2
5-2	Pinogana Cémaco	8 3

Darien has 26,276 registered voters, i.e. 1.50% of the national voters' list. There were 54 centers, 99 polling stations and two election juntas. Voting was held for 29 representatives, seven mayors, four counselors and two legislators.

Observation prior to voting day

The observer assigned to this province visited the localities of La Palma, Metetí, Yaviza, Santa Fe, El Real, Garrachiné, Sambú and Puerto Indio.⁸¹ At each of these places calls were made on the electoral, civil, police and religious authorities. According to the persons interviewed, the political climate posed no difficulties, except for a few guerrilla incursions from neighboring Colombia which had obliged the election authorities to move some of the polling stations in the locality of Yaviza.

Observation on voting day

On voting day the observer attended the opening of polling stations at the voting center located in the Eugenio Pérez school in La Palma. He next moved to Meteti to observe polling stations in the municipalities of Pinogama and Rio Iglesia.

The observer witnessed the closing of polls and the counting of votes at La Palma, in the Eugenio Pérez school voting center. No complaints were presented nor were incidents noted at any stage of the process.

⁸¹ The localities visited represent 21% of the provincial voter's list. The last two places are in the Comarca de Emberá.

Electoral Authorities: Diris Dina, Ariel Kójira, Gabriel Degaiza, Lesbia Morales and Aurelia Quintana.

Suecity Forces: Daniel Aparicio, Emanuel Landadu, Edilberto Guerra, José Núñez, Walter Hernández, Enrique Morales, Francisco de León, Didier Martínez, Astolfo Arodra, Arnulfo Escobar and Jorge Caicedo.

Government Authorities: David Castillo, Ana María de Ramos, Mariana Aspilla, Adalberto Ruiz and Isabel González.

Church Authorities: Monseñor Rómulo Emiliani, Alejandro Rojas, Vicente Sidera Plano and Hugo Asturias.

Alliances: Acción Opositora: Rodolfo Bedoya, Edilberto Dogerama, Teodoro, Pascasio, Abel Espinosa and Avilio Barrios.

Nueva Nación: Guillermo Pérez, Ariel Martínez, Azael González, Feliciano Madrid, Sergio Tocamo, Agapito Camargo, Eusebio Atencio, Salvador Gutiérrez, Osnidio Mecha, Ariel Perea, Rolando Tocaba, Clasmere Caspio, Jazmina Molinar de Dimas, Orlando Martínez, Haydée de Lay and Bernardo Betancourt.

Unión por Panamá: Isac Mosquera, Rolando Jiménez, José Rubrides, Gabriel Julio, Florentino Mela, Bernardino Morales, Ariel Perea, Jorge Escobar, Jacinto Gómez, Natalia de León, Arsenia Echeverría de Othon, Letticia Pitti de Lore, Joaquín Gorgonia and Cecilio de los Santos.

8. Herrera provincial HQ

General information

Herrera is located in the southern part of the country. It borders with the provinces of Coclé, Los Santos and Veraguas. It has an area of 2,340.7 km² and a population of 103,496. Its capital is Chitré. For electoral purposes, Herrera is divided into three circuits:

Electora ICircuits	Districts	No. of Municipalitie s
6-1	Chitré	5
6-2	Los Pozos	8
	Parita	7
	Pesé	8
6-3	Las Minas	6
	Ocú	6
	Santa	5
	María	

There were 72,572 registered voters, i.e. 4.15% of the national voters' list. There were 175 voting centers, 291 polling stations and three election juntas. Voting was held for 45 representatives, seven mayors and three legislators.

Observation prior to election day⁸²

The electoral observers held interviews with the authorities of the Elections Tribunal, the provincial government and the municipal governments. As well, they met with representatives of political parties, the church, civil society and the media.⁸³

Political party representatives declared themselves satisfied with the work of the Elections Tribunal, and in particular with the timely distribution of election materials to all districts, the accreditation of Elections Tribunal Inspectors, and the training provided to members of the polling stations. The only complaint had to do with delays in the delivery of some credentials. On this point, the observers followed up with the Elections Tribunal, which showed itself prepared to resolve the problem.

82 [this footnote is missing - ?]

83 In **Chitré**: Electoral officials and delegates: Héctor Gallardo; Adalberto Chávez, Marcos Saavedra and Fulvia Ocaña. Government authorities: Aminta de Guillén and José Nieves Burgos. In **Parita**: Government authorities: Manuel Darío Barrios. Election officials: Luz Vital Fernández and Juan Armando López, Teresa del Berrocal. In **Pesé**: Election officials: Natividad Aparicio and Agripina de Arjona. In **Santa María**: Government authorities: Amado Serrano. Election officials: Elis Ríos. In **Los Pozos**: Government authorities: Amado Quintero Moreno. Election officials: Rolando Ochoa. In **Las Minas**: Government authorities: Porfirio Pimente. Election officials: Roy Avila. In **Ocú**: Government authorities: Saturnino Santos. Election officials: Jorge Alberto Guerra. In all the district capitals the observers visited the headquarters of the various political parties and made contact with the media.

During their visits to the districts that make up electoral circuit 6-3 (Ocu, Las Minas, Santa Maria), the observers were told, with some urgency, of possible conflicts on election day because of the fact that voters from other circuits had been moved to circuit 6-3. The Elections Tribunal, which was already aware of this fact, took the necessary precautions, and assigned extra police support to the zone. It should be noted that, under the elections law, if a person is registered on the voters' list he must be allowed to vote, even if he is presumed to be resident in another circuit.

Observation on election day

The observers assigned to the province of Herrera covered 7 districts. They visited a total of 30 centers and 100 polling stations.

At all the polling stations observed, voting began between 7 and 7:15 in the morning, all voting materials had been received from the Elections Tribunal, and all members of the polling stations were in place. During the course of the day voting proceeded absolutely normally, in the presence of the security forces and personnel of the Elections Tribunal. At all the polling stations visited there were considerable numbers of political party representatives.

There was a massive turnout of voters on the morning of election day.

In some voting centers of circuit 6-3, political party delegates complained of the fact that elderly citizens were improperly accompanied when they were casting their vote, although no physical impediments were placed in their way.

At the end of the day, the observers appeared at the District Junta of Chitré and the Circuit Junta of the Province of Herrera to witness the handling of returns.

No formal complaints were received during the course of election day.

9. Los Santos provincial HQ

General information

The province of Los Santos is located in the center-west region of Panama, on the Pacific Ocean. It borders on the provinces of Herrera and Veraguas to the west. It has an area of 3,805 km² and a population of 79,600. The capital is Las Tablas.

The province is divided into seven districts and 79 municipalities, covering three electoral circuits.

Electora lCircuits s	Districts	No. of Municipalitie s
7-1	Las	24

	Tablas Pocrí	5
7-2	Guararé Los Santos	10 14
7-3	Macaraca s Pedasí Tonosí	7 5 10

The number of registered voters was 64,026 (3.67% of the national voters' list). There were 259 polling stations, distributed among 155 centers and 3 election juntas. Voting was held for 79 representatives, seven mayors and three legislators.

Observation prior to voting day

Two observers were assigned to visit the seats of the seven districts and a significant number of municipalities in each of those districts. Interviews were held with the principal players involved in the election process. The authorities and officials of the Elections Tribunal provided valuable cooperation in facilitating the Mission's work. For their part, the candidates and members of all political parties praised their relationship with the local authorities of the Elections Tribunal, and stressed that institution's great credibility.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ In **Las Tablas** the observers interviewed the following people: Government and police authorities: Carlos A. Espino, Luis A. Córdoba, Juan Vásquez, Mayor Frank Abrego and Capitán Divo. Electoral officials and delegates: Dámaso Díaz, Edgar Quiel, Elías Samaniego, Gustavo, Edith Aparicio and Lucas Vergara. José Antonio Solís and Fernando Domínguez. Comisión Justicia y Paz: P. Oscar E. Rojas and Víctor Tejada Alianza; Unión por Panamá: Arcadio Villalás, Carlos Sánchez Frias, Ricardo Amaya and Evelio López; Antolín Vega. Nueva Nación: Ramiro Camargo, Alberto "Tito" Afú, Noris Juárez and Dimas Alonso. Acción Opositora: Elpidio Broce Vergara y Sebastián Chang Castro. In **Los Santos** the following persons were interviewed: Government and police authorities: Josefa de Monterre and Mayor Armando Robinson. Electoral officials and delegates: Eliécer Villarreal, Manuel Mendoza, Jacqueline de León and Yedilsa Delgado. Comisión Justicia y Paz: Taray Moreno de Castellero. Nueva Nación: Gil Kaa, Clementina Solís and Adonay Ríos. Acción Opositora: Alcibiades "Bill" García. Unión por Panamá: Ada Solís, Alberto "Tito" Cigarruista, Bertilda García and Agustín Vásquez. In **Guararé** interviews were held with: Government authorities: Manuel Antonio García. Electoral officials and delegates: Víctor Solís, Marisín Díaz and Segundo Corrales. Comisión Justicia y Paz: Avidel Saavedra. Unión por Panamá: Iván Salcedo Broce. Nueva Nación: Eugenio Bustamante, Dimas Dionel Medina and Mabel Morcillo. In **Pocrí** the observers had interviews with the following people: Government authorities: Alcibiades Ballesteros and Nivia Gallardo. Electoral officials and delegates: Aristides Campos and Luis de León. Comisión Justicia y Paz: Lorenzo Cuervo. Unión por Panamá: Everirido Iván Domínguez, Eutipíades Muñoz and Euclides Gutiérrez. Nueva Nación: Hernando Muñoz and Benigno Cedeño. In **Pedasí** the following persons were interviewed: Government authorities: Rutilio Vergara Cárdenas and Dídimo Batista. Electoral officials and delegates: Luis Cedeño and Gladys Díaz de Batista. Comisión Justicia y Paz: Dalys de Barahona. Unión por Panamá: Dalys de Cerrut and Chelo Ramírez. Nueva Nación: Isaac Herrera and Omar Ballesteros. In **Tonosí**, the observers interviewed the following persons: Government authorities: Zobeida de Gracia. Electoral officials and delegates: Roy Espinosa and Laureano Barriá. Comisión Justicia y Paz: Dídimo Delgado. Unión por Panamá: Jacinto González and Oreste de León. Nueva Nación: Félix Rodríguez and Dora Rodríguez. In **Macaracas** the observers had interviews with: Government authorities: Ricaurte Vidal. Electoral officials and delegates: Ramón Peña, Emilio Espino and Carmen Villa. Comisión Justicia y Paz: P. Marcelino García and Doris Cárdenas. Unión por Panamá: Oreste de León and Andrés Cortés. Nueva Nación: Héctor Ortega, María del Socorro Martínez, Olegario Castro, Reina de Jiménez, Mario U. Nieto and Eusebio Castro. Acción Opositora: Rafael Alfaro and Cristóbal Pérez. Permanent contacts were also maintained with local, regional and national radio stations, TV reporters and the press.

The general climate was peaceful and festive, primarily in the urban centers. The observers witnessed two wind-up events in the city of Las Tablas, for two legislative candidates in circuit 7-1:0. Both of these proceeded without incident. Volunteer election delegates were well deployed, and their presence assisted in keeping both events under control. Nonetheless, in some of the rural municipalities there were instances of confrontation between opposing party supporters. This resulted in threats and hostilities that gave rise to oral and written complaints that were submitted to the electoral delegates and OAS observers (see Annex 1).

On April 25 observers attended the ninth and final simulation exercise conducted in the Election Tribunal's offices. The results were satisfactory, and the people responsible declared their confidence that vote counting on election day would proceed smoothly.

It should be noted that in general election material distribution was well organized and took place on time. Nonetheless, during the week before election day there were some difficulties with respect to the delivery of credentials for political party delegates, owing in some cases to errors in the data recorded and, in many cases, to delivery delays. These delays were exacerbated by a fire in the offices of the Elections Tribunal. In light of the concerns that this provoked among political representatives, the Mission maintained constant contact with the election authorities and with representatives of the political parties to ensure that documentation was delivered as quickly as possible. Similarly, the Mission cooperated with election officials in finding solutions to the poor lighting found at some of the voting centers. It is important to mention that the district coordinators of the Elections Tribunal took the necessary steps to remedy the situation.

Observation on election day

On election day, the observers were deployed in all seven districts of the province, and visited the major voting centers in the district seats and in some of the more conflict-prone rural municipalities. In total, they visited 22 educational centers, housing 65 voting stations. The principal data gathered are detailed below:

- Nearly 100% of voting stations were established with their duly appointed members and representatives of the political parties, at the time stipulated. This allowed a similar percentage of voting to begin at 7 a.m.
- At all polling stations visited the election materials were complete. The sole exception was at one station in the El Cañafistulo school, where 10 ballots for legislator were missing.
- There were no reports of errors or omissions in the procedures of installing the polling stations visited.

- Voter turnout was massive, from the early hours of the morning.
- A significant number of political party representatives were on hand at all polling stations.
- Members of the polling stations performed their duties acceptably (in general).
- There was a notable lack of training for most of the supervisors and inspectors at the voting centers. As well, voters had difficulty in finding the centers, because they were not visibly identified.
- The security forces maintained an adequate presence at the voting centers (with a few exceptions).
- The election juntas were established within the required time limits
- Voting stations generally closed on time.
- In 13 of the stations observed, oral complaints were received about coercion on the part of certain individuals who insisted on accompanying voters into the secret voting booths, even if they were not handicapped (as the law stipulates) in a way that would prevent them from casting their vote by themselves.

Vote counting was observed at 3 voting centers located in 2 district seats, and in which 2 circuit counting centers were also installed. This allowed observers to cover the process at each level of the Panamanian election systems (voting stations, circuit junta, district junta and communal junta).

Vote counting proceeded normally, and all legal provisions were complied with. There were no procedural irregularities recorded, nor were any protests or challenges submitted on the part of party representatives.

10. Veraguas provincial HQ

General information

Veraguas is located in the southeastern part of the country. It borders on the provinces of Bocas del Toro, Coclé, Colon, Chiriqui and Herrera. It has an area of 11,293 km² and population of 223,287. The province of Veraguas has an ample network of access roads in nearly all the major municipalities, which account for more than 90% of the province's population. The capital city is Santiago.

The electoral circuits are composed as follows:

Electoral Circuits	Districts	No. of Municipalities
9-1	Santiago	8
9-2	La Mesa Soná	5 10
9-3	Calobre Santa Fe San Francisco	12 7 5
9-4	Atalaya Montijo Río de Jesús	5 9 5
9-5	Cañazas Las Palmas Ñurum	6 12 9

The 138,298 registered voters account for 7.92% of the national voters' list. There were 384 voting centers, 574 polling stations and three election juntas for the election of 93 representatives, 12 mayors and six legislators.

Observation prior to voting day

In the first days of their visit to the province, the observers held working sessions with government authorities, representatives of the electoral Tribunal, candidates and the media, during which they examined activities related to the election process from a number of perspectives.⁸⁵ It should be noted as well that the observers met with various candidates at the time of their calls on the campaign centers of the three alliances. They were also invited to participate at the last meeting of the Security Council of the province of Veraguas, in the Tribunal's headquarters at Santiago. Several candidates requested the presence of the OAS in circuit 9-3 (San Francisco, Calobre and Santa Fe). The reasons for this request were given as follows: the circuit included remote areas where access was difficult; a number of voters from other provinces were registered there; there was a fear that barricades might be set up in the streets to prevent access to voting stations; there was a certain level of apprehension about the electoral methods used in the past by one of the parties in the contest; and there had been serious conflict between candidates and legislators of two political parties (CD and PRD)⁸⁶.

⁸⁵ Electoral authorities: Marta Vallarino de Barría, Gilberto Estrada and Nidia Alveo Barrios.

Media: José Felix, Rubiela de León.

⁸⁶ According to most of the people interviewed, this atmosphere of tension was the result of an aggressive climate that arose at the time of verifying the PRD's internal and primary elections. On one hand, the losing candidate (and current legislator), Enrique Riley Puga, had joined the CD party to in order to seek re-election. On the other hand, the winning candidate in the internal elections, Pedro Miguel González, was accused of having manipulated his election in order to obtain a seat and thereby secure immunity in the face of pending

As well, the observers held coordination meetings with representatives of the Justice and Peace Commission⁸⁷, with delegates of the Embassy of the United States, and with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES).

Observers witnessed the wind-up of campaigning for several candidates⁸⁸, and they accompanied members of the electoral Tribunal in delivering voting materials to the major district seats. They noted some shortcomings in the safekeeping of materials and in the physical security of installations at the offices in Calobre and Santa Fe.

Observation on election day

The observers traveled to 12 districts and 27 municipalities. They visited 60 voting centers. In general, they found that voting proceeded normally, with a large turnout of voters during the course of the morning. The significant number of observers, both national and international, in the area may well have had a positive influence on discouraging any irregularities. The essential comments on election day are as follows:

- The logistical arrangements by the Tribunal meant that all voting stations began on time and without major problems.
- At all centers visited there were a great number of elderly voters who were accompanied by young people (in many cases the same person would assist several older people). Observers reported this situation to officials of the Tribunal and the electoral delegates, who proceeded to instruct members of the polling stations to prevent further such occurrences.
- At some of the voting centers it was found that activists of the PRD were conducting political propaganda. The observers reported their concern to officials of the Tribunal, who immediately met with representatives of the party and assigned an electoral delegate to the area.
- The circuit juntas operated normally and returns were prepared swiftly.

V. ELECTION RESULTS

Less than four hours after the polls closed, the Elections Tribunal began to release the first, unofficial election returns. The partial calculations showed a clear trend in favor of presidential candidate Mrs. Mireya Moscoso and the percentages also

criminal charges. The latter expressed his concern over the campaign to tarnish his reputation and disputed the version of the deeds imputed to him as the result of the death of an American soldier.

⁸⁷ Luis Batista, Edilberto Hernández, Rodrigo Atencio and Nolberto Cáceres

⁸⁸ Among them, those of presidential candidate Alberto Vallarino, and the legislative candidate for circuit 9-5, Pedro Miguel González.

indicated that Mr. Juan Carlos Navarro would become the mayor of Panama City. As well, those returns pointed to a PRD majority in the Legislative Assembly. It should be noted that after the announcement of these preliminary and unofficial figures, the Chief of Mission went to the Press Center of the Collection Tribunal to distribute a statement in which, among other things, he noted that "the efficient organization and administration of the process on the part of the electoral authorities, and the active participation of the citizenry in exercising their right to vote and the responsible behavior of most of the political leadership were significant elements in ensuring the integrity of the elections, and in confirming the highly democratic spirit of the Panamanian people". In that same statement he declared that "we have been witness to the Panamanian people's conviction and their unequivocal understanding that meeting the challenges of continuously improving the democratic process is something that depends on the sum of individual behavior and on the active and responsible participation of every member of Panamanian society". He also declared that "we are confident that in the next few hours there will be a timely announcement of acceptance of the results so that these elections, of great historic importance, can be concluded with a clear and genuine expression of democratic commitment".⁸⁹

It should be noted that, a few moments afterwards, candidates Martin Torrijos and Alberto Vallarin conceded defeat and extended their congratulations to the new President-elect, put forward by the Unión por Panamá alliance.

In the early hours of the morning, with 90% of the votes counted, the Elections Tribunal revealed that voter turnout had been 76.69%, and that spoiled and blank ballots, respectively, had amounted to 1.13% and 2.61%. The percentages for the presidential election showed 44.72% for Mrs. Moscoso, 37.67% for Mr. Torrijos and 17.59% for Mr. Vallarin. With respect to the mayoralty of Panama City, Mr. Navarro won 37.32% of the votes, followed by Mr. Bernal with 31.82% and Mrs. Correa with 30.85%. The ceremony of proclaiming the election results by the JNE took place on May 4 in the La Huaca Theater of the ATLAPA Convention Center. The 40 official reports on nationwide returns for the presidential elections produced the following figures:

Mireya Moscoso	572,717 votes	44.80 %
Martín Torrijos	483,501 votes	37.82 %
Alberto Vallarino	222,250 votes	17.38 %

Annex VI includes the results of the voting in each circuit, by political party.

On May 10, 1999, the Elections Tribunal delivered credentials for the period 1999-2003 to the candidates proclaimed in the general elections.

⁸⁹ The full text of this statement is found in Annex V.

It should be mentioned, finally, that the election results showed clear signs of political maturity, as could be seen in the fact that one alliance could win the Chief Executive position, while another held a majority in the Legislature, and representatives of all political groupings were elected at the local government level.⁹⁰

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Mission considers it important to note that the guarantees offered by the Tribunal and accepted by the political parties were once again a positive indicator of transparency, of the kind that is essential for the entire electoral process in its distinct phases. Among the most important were, on one hand, the unofficial release of results, a procedure of vital importance that allowed citizens to discover quickly what the early trends of voting were and, on the other hand, the efficient work of the National Elections Junta, which made it possible to deliver final returns and proclaim the results within seventy hours after the polls closed.

Another important and positive aspect was the institutional strengthening and credibility of the Elections Tribunal, as evidenced in the opinions offered by various political players with respect to the elections body, and the satisfaction that they expressed in terms of the smooth and permanent communication maintained with the respective authorities, at both the national and provincial levels.

As well, the results underscored the high degree of training demonstrated by members of the polling stations, and the electoral organization deployed by officials of the Tribunal and the security forces contributed significantly to the positive outcome of the elections.

Mention should also be made of the valuable work performed by the Volunteer Delegates Corps and the Justice and Peace Commission, which confirmed that civil society is a fundamental part of the process of democratic consolidation.

There was a high degree of motivation among Panama's citizens with respect to the elections process. This was reflected in the huge crowds that attended campaign events and the heavy numbers of people who turned out to exercise their right to vote. Their enthusiastic participation and the signs of pluralism and tolerance that were everywhere served to highlight the degree of civic responsibility that the Panamanian people have achieved.

On election day proceedings were thoroughly in line with previously established regulatory procedures. While some minor problems were reported to the election authorities, these did not affect the transparency of the election contest nor did they in any way detract from its success.

⁹⁰ Of a total of 761 popularly elected positions proclaimed by the JNE, 40 were the subject of challenges brought before the Elections Tribunal: 20 relating to elections for legislators, 19 for municipal representatives, and one for mayor. This rate of challenges is significantly lower than that recorded in 1994, at which time 93 appeals were brought.

Following are some recommendations that might be considered by the corresponding authorities:

- Conduct training and civic education activities with respect to elections, using languages, dialects and media appropriate to indigenous communities, which are in need of a more objective and institutional understanding of the Panamanian election system, specifically with respect to the mechanics of voting, the features of the process and the benefits of citizen participation, both as voters and as active members of a political organization.
- Verify the voters' list in provinces that have new districts or in which there has been significant internal migration.
- Improve the system for issuing party credentials, since it is common for some parties to lack such documentation on election day. In this respect, an efficient and responsive mechanism should be established for accrediting party representatives that will allow provincial officials of the Elections Tribunal to exercise autonomy and judgment in issuing such accreditation.
- Encourage political parties to provide political training for their supporters, especially their youth members and their polling station representatives.
- Regulate the provision of third-person assistance to voters.
- Make procedures for registering independent candidates more flexible.

VII. ANNEXES

- I. Letter of invitation
- II. Response from the Secretary
- III. Complaint forms and letters
- IV. Forms for polling station representatives
- V. Communiqués
- VI. Results
- VII. Financial Statement