



PRIME MINISTER
OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

July 9, 2020

His Excellency Irwin La Rocque
Secretary-General
CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY SECRETARIAT
Office of the Secretary-General
Greater Georgetown
Cooperative Republic of Guyana

Dear Secretary General

National Parliamentary Elections are scheduled to be held in Trinidad and Tobago on August 10, 2020. As you are aware, we have a long history of conducting free and fair national elections here in Trinidad and Tobago and have participated in many election observation missions within CARICOM and further afield.

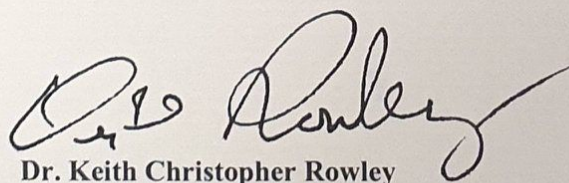
The Government of Trinidad and Tobago extends an invitation to CARICOM to send an election observation mission under its auspices to observe our processes and operations in the upcoming Parliamentary Elections.

Given our management of the prevailing COVID-19 Pandemic the borders of Trinidad and Tobago remain closed. As a result, members of election observation missions would need to arrive in Trinidad and Tobago no later than July 24, 2020 to facilitate fourteen (14) days of state supervised mandatory quarantine.

Members of election observation missions therefore would need to apply for and obtain an exemption to enable entry into Trinidad and Tobago from the Minister of National Security of Trinidad and Tobago. In which case, a request for such exemption for persons from the sponsoring agencies on their behalf will be considered with dispatch.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago would be pleased if our request for an election observation mission could find favour with CARICOM.

I await your early reply.



Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley



Caribbean Community Secretariat
Office of the Secretary-General
Turkeyen
P. O. Box 10827
Greater Georgetown
Guyana

10 July 2020

Dr. The Honourable Keith C. Rowley
Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago
Office of the Prime Minister
Whitehall, No. 29 Maraval Road
Queen's Park West
Port-of-Spain
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Honourable Prime Minister

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 9 July 2020, inviting the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to mount an Election Observation Mission to observe the National Parliamentary Elections to be held in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on 10 August 2020.

I wish to advise that, in accordance with our procedures, the Secretariat will bring the invitation to the attention of CARICOM Member States, and will initiate administrative arrangements to facilitate the deployment of an Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

The CARICOM Secretariat is honoured to support the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as it makes arrangements to hold National Parliamentary Elections, in keeping with the principles of democracy and rule of law which underpin the tradition of good governance in the Caribbean Community.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Irwin Larocque'.

IRWIN LAROCQUE
SECRETARY-GENERAL



SAVINGRAM

FROM: Secretary-General, Caribbean Community

TO: Minister of Foreign Affairs, Antigua and Barbuda
Minister of Foreign Affairs, The Bahamas
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Barbados
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Belize
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dominica
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grenada
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Guyana
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Haiti
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jamaica
Minister of Foreign Affairs, St. Kitts and Nevis
Minister of External Affairs, Saint Lucia
Minister of Foreign Affairs, St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Suriname
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trinidad and Tobago

COPIED: Ambassadors of Member States accredited to CARICOM
Director-General, Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States

No. 408/2020

10 July 2020

REQUEST FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FOR THE MOUNTING OF A CARICOM ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION (CEOM)

1. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat wishes to bring to the attention of Member States the **attached** letter dated 9 July 2020, from Dr. the Honourable Keith C. Rowley, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, advising that National Parliamentary Elections will be held on **Monday, 10 August 2020** and extending an invitation to the Secretariat to deploy a CARICOM Election Observation Mission (CEOM) to observe the electoral process.
2. The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has advised that, given the management of the prevailing COVID-19 Pandemic, the borders of Trinidad and Tobago remain closed. As a result, members of the CEOM would need to arrive in Trinidad and Tobago **no later than 24 July 2020** to facilitate fourteen (14) days of state-supervised mandatory quarantine.

**REQUEST FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
FOR THE MOUNTING OF A CARICOM ELECTIONS OBSERVATION MISSION (CEOM)**

3. Members of the Election Observation Mission would also need to apply for and obtain an exemption to enable entry into Trinidad and Tobago from the Minister of National Security of Trinidad and Tobago. In which case, a request for such exemption for the designated persons will be considered with dispatch.
4. The CARICOM Secretariat invites Member States to identify suitable nationals to be members of the CARICOM Election Observation Mission (CEOM), and who are available between the dates of **24 July to 14 August 2020**. Please note that only one (1) national per Member State is to be submitted for the CEOM, and that the individual nominated should be preferably a Senior Electoral Officer or very experienced in electoral monitoring.
5. The following information should be submitted in respect of each nominee by **Thursday, 16 July 2020** -
 - Name
 - Place and Date of Birth
 - Address (Street Address)
 - Telephone and Telefax Numbers
 - Email Address
 - Curriculum Vitae
 - Name of Beneficiary (for insurance purposes)
 - Passport Details (type, number, place and date of issue, date of expiry)
6. This information should be sent to the Secretary-General, Caribbean Community, **for the attention of** -

Ambassador Colin Granderson
Assistant Secretary-General
Foreign and Community Relations
Email: Zailoon.Barrow@caricom.org and Helen.Marshall@caricom.org

copied to –

Ms. Valique Gomes
Senior Project Officer
Foreign Policy and Community Relations
Email: Valique.Gomes@Caricom.org; and Serojnie.Seetaram@Caricom.org
7. **The CARICOM Secretariat will convey further information concerning health protection protocols and transportation arrangements for the fielding of the CEOM.**

**REQUEST FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
FOR THE MOUNTING OF A CARICOM ELECTIONS OBSERVATION MISSION (CEOM)**

8. The Secretariat looks forward to the cooperation of Member States in facilitating the mounting of the CARICOM Election Observation Mission to the National Parliamentary Elections of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Original signed by:

Amb. Colin Granderson
Assistant Secretary-General
Foreign and Community Relations
/f/ SECRETARY-GENERAL

Exchanges between SG Laroque of CARICOM and Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago during the period 22 to 25 July, 2020.

[7/22, 1:31 PM] Larocque: Dear Minister, The request for nominees for the CARICOM Election Observation Mission for Trinidad and Tobago was circulated to member states by Savingram #408 on 10 July. The document informed of the quarantine requirement of two weeks. A reminder to member states was sent out on 16 July. To date three nominees have been put forward - Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados and Saint Lucia. I will keep you abreast of further developments with regard to fielding the observation mission.

[7/22, 1:37 PM] Larocque: Dear Minister, in addition to Colin Granderson's text message above which he shared with me, and following on our telephone conversation today, I have been advised that the cost of quarantine per member of the electoral observation mission is US\$2,500. It is with much regret that I must inform you that we did not make budgetary provisions for the cost of quarantine. Any relief which could be provided in that regard would greatly facilitate the Missions visit.

[7/24, 11:16 PM] Dennis Moses: Let the potential members of the Election Observation Mission undergo the COVID-19 test as soon as possible so the 14 days can start. Give us the results. We will also test them on arrival. Let us get the CARICOM Election Observation Mission in Trinidad and Tobago as soon as possible.

[7/25, 7:53 AM] Larocque: We only have 3 members. I am not sure how effectively they will be able to observe polling day. We need a minimum 10, preferably 15, given the number of polling stations and the geographical dispersion.

[7/25, 7:55 AM] Larocque: We need to have more persons on the ground.



Commonwealth Secretary-General

14 July 2020

Honourable Prime Minister,

I thank you for your letter of 9 July 2020, formally notifying me that National Parliamentary Elections are scheduled to be held on 10 August 2020, and inviting me to deploy a Commonwealth Observer Group.

As you rightly observe, the Commonwealth has a proud history of positive engagement with Trinidad and Tobago regarding election observation. The Commonwealth observed the 2000 and the 2015 Elections. Eminent Trinidad and Tobago nationals have served with distinction in Observer Groups across the Commonwealth.

While the COVID-19 pandemic poses unprecedented logistical and practical challenges, we are committed to making every possible effort to enable us to respond positively to your request for an observation mission and to assist Trinidad and Tobago in any way practicable. Thus, I have instructed my officials to work with your authorities to make every effort to overcome any logistical or other challenges in order to facilitate the presence of a Commonwealth Observer Group for the 10 August 2020 National Parliamentary Elections.

I note that your Government, as expected, continues to implement robust measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and that the current protocols require the Commonwealth Secretariat to apply to the Minister of National Security for exemption to be granted in order for election observers to enter Trinidad and Tobago, and that if this is granted fourteen days of state supervised mandatory quarantine are required. While the Commonwealth Secretariat would be able to meet the costs of the Observer Mission in the usual way, our current straitened financial position is such that we would not be able to provide funding to cover a fourteen-day period of quarantine. I have therefore instructed my officials to discuss this matter with yours, and it would be most helpful if the Government of Trinidad and Tobago were able to offer assistance.

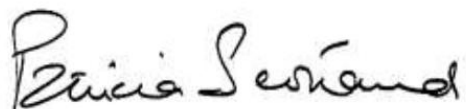
My officials will be in touch with the Trinidad and Tobago Elections and Boundaries Commission in connection with necessary technical arrangements, and we should be most grateful if your Government would kindly nominate a separate focal point with whom Commonwealth Secretariat officials could liaise to discuss other necessary logistical arrangements pertinent to the COVID-19 environment. In this regard, I enclose an initial Information Sheet on matters which Commonwealth Secretariat officials would wish to consult your nominated focal point.

The Hon Dr Keith C Rowley MP

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I thank you once again, Prime Minister, for the trust you have placed in the Commonwealth Secretariat, particularly during these times which are so testing for us all.

With all good wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia Scotland". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC

The Hon Dr Keith C Rowley MP
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
13 - 15 St Clair Avenue
Port of Spain
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO



Commonwealth Secretary-General

23 July 2020

Dear Minister,

I thank you very much for your telephone call last Friday 17 July 2020, and for bringing up the pressing issues I mentioned in my letter of 14 July 2020 to the Prime Minister, The Hon Dr Keith Rowley. I also thank you for the warmth and support you have always shown towards the Secretariat.

As mentioned by the Prime Minister, the Commonwealth has a proud history of positive engagement with Trinidad and Tobago regarding election observation, and we are therefore keen to provide the requested election observation support, notwithstanding the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have potential Observers on stand-by, and my officials have made every effort to put in place potential arrangements, including logistical arrangements, hotels bookings, available flights, etc. to attend to this important invitation. Sadly, I understand that a Focal Point has not yet been communicated and this is essential for the deployment of the mission. Given the current circumstances, it does not seem possible to deploy them by Friday 24 July, as there are critical arrangements that should have been made with the Focal Point prior to deploying.

I remain committed to deploying a Commonwealth Observer Group if the necessary arrangements and protocols can be agreed.

With all good wishes,

The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC

Senator the Honourable Dennis Moses
Minister for Foreign and CARICOM Affairs
St Claire Circle
St Claire
Port of Spain
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO



NOTE NO. 0885

The Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago presents its compliments to the Commonwealth Secretariat and has the honour to refer to the request of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as conveyed by letter from Dr. the Honourable Keith Christopher Rowley, M.P., Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, to The Right Honourable Patricia Scotland QC, Commonwealth Secretary-General, to mount a Commonwealth Election Observer Mission to oversee the Parliamentary Elections to be held on 10th August, 2020.

The Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs has the honour further to express the appreciation of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the response of the Secretary-General and the Commonwealth's readiness to render assistance.

In this regard, the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs advises that, as usual, the Permanent Secretary (Ag.) of the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago stands ready and is available to be the focal point requested by the Secretary-General in her response to the letter from the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. Additionally, the Chief of Protocol, will serve as an alternate focal point. Contact details of the focal point and alternate focal point are enclosed as is information requested by the Secretary-General.

The Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Commonwealth Secretariat the assurances of its highest consideration.



PORT OF SPAIN – 23rd July, 2020

INFORMATION SHEET

1. Trinidad and Tobago's COVID-19 testing requirements

A negative Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR)-based COVID-19 test is to be presented from a certified institution from the country of departure no more than 72 hours prior to departure. All persons entering Trinidad and Tobago will be subject to quarantine in a State-determined facility. Such persons would be tested upon arrival and before the quarantine period of fourteen (14) days is over.

2. Clear advice on available measures to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the country

Trinidad and Tobago follows the COVID-19 public health guidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO), including social distancing, hand washing, wearing of masks and other mechanisms of adopted for proper personal hygiene.

3. Availability and provision of flights into and out Trinidad and Tobago, and the necessary clearances required, if any

Given that Trinidad and Tobago's borders are closed, commercial flights in and out of Trinidad and Tobago are currently not available. As a result, exemption/s for entry of the aircraft/s transporting members of the Observer Group will be required. To facilitate this, the Ministry would require official communication conveying date and time of arrival into Trinidad and Tobago, date and time of departure from Trinidad and Tobago, aircraft model and registration, airport of arrival (North or South terminal of Piarco International Airport), names and passport numbers of crew members. Kindly note that crew members will not be permitted to disembark the aircraft.

Another exemption will be required when the aircraft returns to collect the team for departure. The same information will be required.

On the related matter of travel exemptions for the individual members of the Observer Group, please be advised that the following should be provided:

- A covering letter from the Commonwealth Secretariat advising of the names of the officials comprising the CEOM and requesting travel exemptions for same; and
- Passport biodata pages of all members of the team.

4. Advice and measures in place for COVID-19 management if one or more Commonwealth Observers or staff members develop COVID-19 symptoms or succumb to COVID-19

Trinidad and Tobago has adopted a policy to treat, stabilize, test and discharge all persons, without prejudice towards nationality or any other factors, should individuals in Trinidad and Tobago test

positive for COVID-19 or develop any COVID-19 symptoms. Any person testing positive will be transferred to the Couva Medical and Multi-Training Facility for treatment.

5. Measures that have been put in place to facilitate election observation, namely freedom of movement, and freedom of access to relevant electoral processes and material, electoral actors, inter alia

The Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs will work alongside all relevant national stakeholders, including the Elections and Boundaries Commission, to facilitate freedom of movement and access to all appropriate processes and material.

6. Designation of a Focal Point from the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs to assist with contacts

The Liaison Officer at the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs with whom the Secretariat may consult on all matters related to the logistical preparations for the Observer Group is Ms. Reita Toussaint, Permanent Secretary (Ag.), Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs. The alternate Focal Point is Ms. Kiva Clarke, Chief of Protocol. Contact details are as follows:

Focal Point	Mobile Number	E-mail Address
Ms. Reita Toussaint, Permanent Secretary (Ag.)	+868 704 9217	toussaintr@foreign.gov.tt
Ms. Kiva Clarke Chief of Protocol	+868 499 4919 Office: + 868 623 6894 Ext. 2680 or 2134	chiefof protocol@foreign.gov.tt copy to ramsubaght@foreign.gov.tt

7. Assignment of a member of the National Task Force, who can brief the Observer Group regarding medical advice

The Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs stands ready to arrange a health briefing for the Commonwealth Observer Group upon arrival into the country

Whatsapp messages between Canadian High Commissioner and Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs during the period 21 to 27 July, 2020 :

[7/21, 2:30 PM] Dennis Moses: High Commissioner Gupta

I refer to our telephone conversation earlier today on an Election Observation Mission to Trinidad and Tobago under the aegis of the Commonwealth relative to the upcoming national parliamentary elections in Trinidad and Tobago on 10 August 2020.

I am to express my appreciation for any assistance rendered in securing resources to cover the costs associated with the quarantine of members of the Mission.

Regards.

Dennis Moses, Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs.]

[7/21, 2:31 PM] Canada High Commissioner: Thank you Minister. I have asked my capital to see what we can do. Will the same request be made of the UK? Kumar

[7/22, 2:09 PM] Dennis Moses: Yes It has been made.

[7/24, 4:05 AM] Dennis Moses: Good morning, High Commissioner.

I seek an update on the request of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for assistance to cover costs related to the quarantine of members of the Election Observation Missions relative to the upcoming elections in Trinidad and Tobago.

Regards.

Dennis Moses, Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs.

[7/24, 8:42 AM] Canada High Commissioner: Good morning Minister

I am still waiting for guidance from my Ministry. I will follow up with them to try and get a clear answer. My apologies for the delay.

Kumar

[7/27, 8:53 AM] Canada High Commissioner: Minister

My HQ still has not come back to me regarding support for the observers (managing funding for quarantined is a new policy area) I appreciate that we are now outside the quarantine period. I apologize for this.

Kumar

Whatsapp messages between UK High Commissioner and Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs during the period 22 to 24 July, 2020 :

[7/22, 4:44 PM] Dennis Moses: Dear High Commissioner Stew

I refer to our telephone conversation earlier today on Election Observation Missions to Trinidad and Tobago under the aegis of the Commonwealth and CARICOM relative to the upcoming national parliamentary elections in Trinidad and Tobago on 10 August 2020.

I am to express my appreciation for any assistance rendered in securing resources to cover the costs associated with the quarantine of members of the Missions.

Regards.

Dennis Moses

Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs.

[7/22, 5:01 PM] British High Commissioner Tim Stew: Dear Minister,

Thank you for today's phone call and for the request above. I have conveyed it to London and will respond as soon as I have any information.

Best wishes, Tim Stew

[7/23, 12:14 PM] British High Commissioner Tim Stew: Dear Minister,

I understand that while willing and committed to deploying an observer group here, the Commonwealth Secretariat are finding it challenging to identify sufficient observers able to offer themselves for the extended period required by the 14 day quarantine. They have assembled a team but given the short timeframe could only deploy if the protocols used in recent other regional observer missions are followed - which they understand was C19 testing and a one day quarantine.

No doubt they will be relaying this to you, but it inevitably means the question of funding a 14 day quarantine does not arise.

I will of course forward any further information I receive.

Best wishes,

Tim Stew

[7/24, 4:22 AM] Dennis Moses: Good morning High Commissioner

Thank you for the information above.

The Commonwealth has not yet conveyed information to us on difficulties encountered in identifying election observers as a result of the requirement for a fourteen day quarantine.

I look forward to receiving any further information on the request of Trinidad and Tobago for assistance to cover the costs associated with the quarantine of members of the Election Observation Missions.

Regards.

Dennis Moses

Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs.

[7/24, 6:16 PM] British High Commissioner Tim Stew: Thank you Minister.

We have been back in touch with the Commonwealth Secretariat today, urging them to give you a clear answer directly and promptly on what is possible in these COVID days, with the timelines you have.

It's difficult, we all understand. And all respect your sensible COVID quarantine measures.

We remain keen and committed to supporting free and fair elections here in all ways we practically can.

Best wishes,

Tim Stew

[7/24, 7:28 PM] British High Commissioner Tim Stew: Dear Minister,

I recognise the urgency and how important this issue is to you. I have been pressing the case with London and directly with the Commonwealth Secretariat tonight again to see what flex might be possible under COVID.

The two week quarantine appears to make it very difficult for them. I equally understand why you are keen to follow medical advice on that sensible required period.

The Secretariat said they would be in touch with you today directly. Which is good. If I can though help to negotiate some possible middle ground, which would inevitably require a shorter quarantine at this stage, I am of course happy to use my good offices to do so.

I will update you Minister if I hear anything further from the Secretariat over the weekend.

Best wishes,

Tim Stew

[7/24, 7:37 PM] Dennis Moses: Ok.Thanks.