

Centrist Nito Cortizo elected president of Panama



Panama City, May 6 (RHC)-- In a close presidential race against right-wing Romulo Roux, center-left Laurentino "Nito" Cortizo won by 32.98 percent of votes against 31.03 in Sunday's Panamanian general elections, according to the Panamanian Electoral Council.

The newly elected head of state, from the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) -- created in 1979 by Omar Torrijos -- will lead the Central American nation for the 2019-2024 term. The 65-year-old former agricultural minister largely focused his campaign on promises to end government corruption and combat inequality.

During his campaign, Cortizo also pledged to establish a new office called ProPanama within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which would work with embassies, consulates and foreign investors to restore confidence in the country in the aftermath of corruption scandals, such as the Panama Papers and Odebrecht.

Cortizo has said he will review his country's stance with respect to Venezuela, especially the positions adopted within the Group of Lima, including the recognition of Juan Guaido as interim president. The newly-elected president has indicated he is not in favor of recognizing the so-called interim president of Venezuela.

The PRD candidate won with about 590,000 of the 2.7 million valid votes cast on Sunday, in which Panamanians also chose National Assembly legislators, members for the Central American Parliament, city mayors and local authorities.

Of the 71 seats for the National Assembly, Cortizo's coalition between center-left PRD (27) and the center-right Liberal Nationalist Republican Movement (1) won 28 seats, followed by right-wing Roux's coalition between Democratic Change (18) and Alliance Party (1) with 19 seats, the center-right coalition of the Panamanian Party (9) and Popular Party (0) got 9 seats, and the last four were obtained by non-affiliated independent lawmakers.

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