

Dominica rejects OAS interference in elections



Washington, November 23 (RHC)-- Dominica has made it clear that it will invite CARICOM, the United Nations and other multilateral bodies to observe the elections, but not the OAS, responding to the interference by the OAS General Secretary a few days before.

"We have our reserves regarding their participation in recent electoral processes in the region," Dominica's Foreign Affairs Minister Francine Baron stated during the special session with all the council members in Washington, DC. She also explained in detail the sophisticated electoral system and voters' registration system to prove secure results.

"No member state has the obligation to invite the OAS to observe its electoral processes," added Ambassador Anton E. Edmunds, St Lucia's representative in Washington D.C., speaking on the behalf of all CARICOM state-members.

The meeting follows the comments earlier this week by the Organization of American States' chief Luis Almagro on the protests against the government that took place the night before, supporting the opposition demanding an electoral reform ahead of the coming elections.

The formerly French and British colony of about 75,000 residents is holding new elections on December 6th. However, the opposition United Workers' Party has been pushing the governing party to enact

reforms in a bid to gain a better electoral advantage.

On Monday night, more than 200 protesters clashed with the police when they tried to march to President Charles Savarin's home to call for reforms. According to new reports, the security forces set up barricades in Roseau as the protesters call for the implementation of electoral reforms, which were dictated by the Organization of American States at a meeting in August.

Dominica's Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit has since addressed the small Caribbean island nation to condemn the "intrusion of violence into the election campaign," pointing out that the protesters are not demonstrating because of electoral reform, as previously reported by the western media.

The premier also stated that the upcoming election will be governed by the same process as all elections, highlighting the fact that his opposition under the same system during the last election.

What follows is the official statement:

CARICOM Statement on the Situation in the Commonwealth of Dominica:

We thank the Honorable Francine Baron, Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs of the Commonwealth of Dominica, for her informative explanation of the political situation in her country

All electoral reform is complex. We welcome efforts at electoral reform within the framework of the governing principles and processes provided for, in the constitution of any Member State

The framework for democracy and the practices of its principles exist in Dominica, including freedom of assembly and expression. We expect that all parties will act within the rule of law and respect for the constitutional order

We note that there is no deadly or widespread violence, as Dominica prepares to hold elections within the current provisions of its constitution

The Caribbean has always had a strong tradition of democracy, notably free and fair elections.

Considering previous electoral missions in the region, we know that the Organization of American States as an institution understands this

There must be the recognition that there are a number of highly credible bodies that observe elections, and the Commonwealth of Dominica has invited four of them to observe its elections. There is no obligation for any member state to invite the OAS

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