

**5th in the Series National Dialogue for a Culture of Democracy**  
***“Distributed Governance: Widening the Sphere of Participation”***

**Radisson Fort George**

**October 20, 2004**

**By Mrs. Myrtle Palacio**

Muy buenas dias! Buiti Binafi! A pleasant good morning to all!

**We at Elections & Boundaries Department are in the election business and**

**FAILURE is NOT an option.** This department is one of two Election Management Bodies in Belize and is fully responsible for electoral administration. Voter registration is an important task in electoral administration as the process culminates in the compilation of the VOTERS' LIST. This LIST is the lifeblood of our democracy as it determines WHO will participate—WHO will vote long before Polling Day. The Voters' List then, is a crucial feature in the organization of free and fair elections.

Voter registration is conducted every working day in twelve District Offices countrywide. The law governing electoral registration empowers electors to be a part of the process to ensure that those who get on the LIST are duly qualified to do so. The law empowers the elector---YOU & YOU & I to participate in ensuring that the LIST is reliable. **But what are our rights and responsibilities under these laws? Do we know these laws? Are we so empowered!!**

On behalf of the Staff of the Elections and Boundaries Department, I invite you to join us on our journey. Today's journey takes us on our continued effort at voter education and community outreach. Voter education is an initiative and a commitment we first embarked upon in November 1999.

Since then the department has visited over 160 schools and organizations, organized annual open houses countrywide, implemented Library Corners and produced two booklets, several brochures, bookmarkers, a monthly newsletter, annual department reports, election reports, and a calendar. Our website is updated regularly and has been useful as a tool to chronicle election updates and results.

Distributed Governance: Widening the Sphere of Participation, is the 5<sup>th</sup> in the series National Dialogue for a Culture of Democracy. We welcome the University of Belize as partners in this collaborative effort. It has been our experience that the benefits in networking are many. Three leaders from the community have taken the time out to present on the important issue of participation in electoral registration. Please sit back, absorb and discuss. We at the Department, value you as partners—the student, political party activist, church leader, all—in building and maintaining our democracy.

Lastly, you are invited to view the exhibit that Staff members have so graciously mounted. E-democracy has created new and vigorous ways for making information available, so please visit our website [www.belize-elections.org](http://www.belize-elections.org).

**We are in the Election Business Where failure is NOT an option!!**

Thank you