

“M. Palacio’s reply to e-mail message response”

Sir:

Many thanks for your initial reply to my Communiqué and two e-mail messages dated March 23 and March 31, 2008. I am responding for the record. My sole motivation is two- fold: 1. my interest in preserving the integrity of the electoral system and process in Belize 2. to contribute to the dialogue of strengthening the culture of international election observer missions.

Your e-mail message response to my critique of the Belize Report dated March 31, stated that:

1. There are no “*gross errors*” in the Expert Team Report
2. The Report “*is the independent work of the Expert Team*”, and so the Commonwealth Secretariat is “*not free to make changes*”
3. You are “*worried by the urgency and tone*” of my communication; and
4. You would be happy for me to “*give you a call at anytime*”... “*to discuss the issues*” I raised

In my view, election observation is a tool for promoting and advancing democracy via the reports of the Observer Team. While it is only a snapshot of the political culture of a country and people, election observation is conducted during an exceedingly sensitive period in the existence of that country and its people. Therefore an election observer mission’s data collection must be accurate, comprehensive and methodological. The data should be analyzed in a systematic manner that is objective and impartial, so as to produce a report that is credible and legitimate in the eyes of all—international community, government and people.

Based on the forgoing view, I took the time out to pen my criticisms on the Expert Team Report on Belize’s 2008 elections directly to the Commonwealth Secretariat, with recommendations for improvement or strengthening future missions. Also, I have high expectations in a Commonwealth Secretariat election observer team because of my past experiences as a team member of Commonwealth election observer teams; and recent, positive interactions with other divisions in the Commonwealth Secretariat.

My Communiqué pointed out some significant shortcomings with justifications of the Belize Report, which has post-election implications in light of the wider objective of promoting and advancing democracy in the Commonwealth. In so doing, I have questioned the credibility of the Report from a professional point of view, and I am intimating that the serious inconsistencies can unjustifiably blemish electoral systems and process in Belize.

The Expert Team was put together by the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Report is on the Commonwealth Secretariat’s website and hard copies have been distributed by the Commonwealth Secretariat. In my humble estimation, the Commonwealth Secretariat should bear some responsibility for the Expert Team Report on Belize’s 2008 elections.

I Myrtle Palacio, OBE

April 4, 2008