



**STATEMENT ON GUYANA ELECTIONS**  
**by the**  
**CARICOM PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANISATION (CPSO)**  
*(June 29, 2020)*

First and foremost, we congratulate the Guyanese people on their patience with what is a frustrating process for all. Guyana is a beautiful country with wonderful, hospitable people and deserves the prosperous future for all that is awaiting her. However, there is a path, if pursued, that could exacerbate divisions and lead to even greater income disparity and unhappiness. The CPSO sees the current impasse over the Elections as an opportunity for Guyana to recognize and choose a fair, inclusive, and righteous path forward.

The CPSO is a non-political organization and takes no sides in the outcome of the Elections. We wish to express our concern for, yet confidence in the democracy of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. The strength of all democracies lies in the hands of the institutions and leaders who guide and protect them. There has clearly been a breakdown in the election process and systems in Guyana and the current dispute should serve to increase our resolve to strengthen the governance and operations of the Guyana Elections Commission to ensure that never again would an election in Guyana be enveloped in such dispute over the validity of the results.

The ruling party APNU+AFC has declared victory based on a June 23<sup>rd</sup> report issued by the Chief Elections Officer which showed 171,825 of the votes deemed valid for the ruling party and 166,343 of the votes deemed valid for the opposition PPP/C party. However, over 115,000 votes were deemed invalid, which if counted would show the opposite result as reported by independent observers. The current conundrum is set up for rejection and invalidation of any result that eventually prevails.

How can this deadlock be broken? In any election, parties compete on the basis that the outcome must be accepted as the will of the people. While each side accuses the other of trying to manipulate the result, ultimately it is the will of the people that confers legitimacy on any winner to lead the country. Since, the electoral process in Guyana has clearly demonstrated its vulnerability to interference, the CPSO believes it is vitally important to the legitimacy of any declared winner and for the sake of the people and the economic future of Guyana, for the Courts to rule on the recount of votes (including the issue concerning the validity or invalidity of the disputed votes). A failure to lawfully and definitively resolve this issue will leave some 50 percent of the people in Guyana certain that the elections were stolen by one party or the other.

Guyana is a founding member of the CARICOM and hosts its Secretariat Headquarters. Both parties agreed to rely on CARICOM Observers to monitor the conduct of the elections process as well as the recount of votes cast. Given the current impasse and the necessity for Guyana's 2020 elections to have legitimacy, it is appropriate that the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) be used as the final arbiter in this matter. The CPSO appeals to the leaders of both parties to have recourse to the Court of Appeal or the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), if the latter finds that it has jurisdiction to hear and determine the issue concerning the validity or invalidity of the disputed votes.

This moment of great uncertainty could potentially exacerbate divisions in Guyana. However, the moment can be seized instead to bring Guyana together responsibly and to take action on building stronger governing institutions. We have faith and confidence that the leaders of both the ruling party and the opposition recognize the need for their leadership to be validated by the voice of the people of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana; and that must be ruled upon by an independent and trustworthy institution.

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### **ABOUT THE CPSO**

Acting in accordance with Article 22 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas (RTC), the Heads of Government, at the Fortieth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government in July 2019, designated the CARICOM Private Sector Organization (CPSO) an Associate Institution of CARICOM. The CPSO is to act as the “apex” Institution for the private sector in CARICOM, with a mandate to contribute to the full implementation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). The Membership of the CPSO is comprised of private sector entities operating in the CARICOM space, including Micro Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (MSMEs).