

**STATEMENT
BY
THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTION
OBSERVATION MISSION**

The National Assembly elections in the Seychelles from 4 to 6 December 2002 were observed, at an invitation of President France Albert RENE, by a team from the European Parliament, made up of five Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), Mr John CORRIE, Head of Delegation, EPP-ED, United Kingdom, Mr Jas GAWRONSKI, EPP-ED, Italy, Ms Theresa ZABELL, EPP-ED, Spain, Mr Gerard COLLINS, UEN, Ireland, and Ms Colette FLESCH, ELDR, Luxembourg and three officials of the European Parliament, Ms Rosemary OPACIC, Administrator, Ms Margaret FRANÇOIS, Assistant, and Mr Charilaos PALASSOF, EPP-ED, Political Group Advisor.

The Team are particularly grateful to all concerned for the organisation of their visit – particularly to Mr Hendrick GAPPY, Electoral Commissioner, and his officials at headquarters for their help and co-operation.

The Team had various meetings with Human Rights Groups, Church Officials and other persons from civil society. The Team also had extensive briefings from the two leaders of the opposition parties, the Seychelles National Party (SNP) and the Democratic Party (DP), and from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the British High Commissioner and the French Ambassador. The Observation Team regretted the non-availability of leading members of the SPPF party when a meeting was arranged at the party headquarters.

Having listened to a cross-section of civil society, the Team were perturbed to hear of a number of instances of harassment, particularly in the North District, that appeared to have been perpetrated, according to reports, by a small group of people and, on most occasions, led by one person.

There were suggestions that these incidents had not been fairly dealt with. But the Team can only state what was reported to it. The Team also read a number of newspapers published in the run-up to the election and had some criticism of content, presentation and timing. On the whole, the Team were pleased to hear there had been so few incidents both before and during the election.

On 4 December, the Team divided into 3 groups and visited Polling Stations on Mahé, Praslin, Silhouette, Desroches and Alphonse. The Teams observed a number of polling stations, including the opening and closing of polls. All Teams were impressed by the quality of the polling station officers and the way polls were conducted. Except for a few minor infringements observed (eg. the polling station on Silhouette Island, where the official closing time was extended to accommodate voters), the Teams were satisfied by what they saw.

On 5 December, only two Teams could be sent out to observe due to logistics (there were only three seats allocated on aircraft: one seat to Bird, Denis and Fregate Islands, and two seats to Assumption and Farquahr Islands). The Teams observed a number of stations, including the opening and closing of polls. In general, the organisation was of a high standard and few complaints were reported. However, the Team considered that, having travelled from Europe, sufficient facilities should have been provided for them by the competent Seychelles authorities to enable them to fulfill their duties.

On 6 December, the Team met President France Albert RENE, and a number of issues were discussed. The Team then split into five. Two Teams covered the islands of La Digue and Praslin respectively, while the other three Teams visited all the remaining 22 polling stations on Mahé and stayed at a number of polling stations to observe the count.

Having taken all issues into consideration, including the incidents in the run-up to the polling days, the Team considers that, overall, the election was conducted in a satisfactory manner and wish the new Legislative Body a successful term in office.