

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Several Recommendations For Improvement In BVI Elections Process

Politics / **Published On September 11, 2015 07:47 PM /**

Beverly Lewis **September 11, 2015**



TORTOLA -- The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association British Islands and Mediterranean Region has issued its final report on the 2015 General Election held on June 8 in the BVI, and one of the recommendations is the introduction of Fixed-Term Parliaments which proponents say would fix the timing of the Elections.

The report provides an overview of the 2015 General Election with sections on the Election Observer Mission, Advance Polling Day, Election Day, the counting of votes, complaints and appeals and participation of women and youth during the process. It also speaks to the Virgin Islands legal framework, election administration in the territory, candidate and voter registration, the campaign process and the media.

It ends with a list of eight recommendations.

Steve Rodan, Speaker of the House of Keys, Isle of Man and Head of the Mission stated in the preliminary report and again in the final report that the Mission believes that the Virgin Islands 2015 General Election was genuine, vibrant and competitive.

They however stated that improvements were needed to streamline the cumbersome voting and counting procedures as well as to address the deficiencies in the regulatory framework, particularly in relation to the registration of political parties and campaign financing. In the final report, eight recommendations were made.

A recommendation was made for the introduction of a Code of Conduct to be signed by candidates which would allow for a respectful and clean issues-based campaign. A third recommendation was for the creation of a permanent independent Elections Commission which would provide democratic oversight of the Office of the Supervisor of Elections, adding a further layer of public accountability.

It would also provide clarity over the complaints process and address security requirements pertaining to the sealing and storing of ballot boxes. With regard to the Legal Framework, recommendations were made to consolidate the various statutes into a single piece of legislation and to amend it to include the establishment, registration and regulation of political parties.

The Introduction of finance regulations was recommended to provide guidelines and limits by individuals and businesses when contributing to a candidate or party's political campaign. Other recommendations were made on party and candidate advertising, the voting process, the closing of the polls and the counting process.

The two main parties which contested the General Elections were the National Democratic Party, NDP and the Virgin Islands Party, VIP.

The NDP won the election 11 seats to 2 in the House of Assembly.