



Government of Dominica

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND CARICOM AFFAIRS

Tel: (767) 266 3213/3276
Fax: (767) 448 5200
Email: foreignaffairs@dominica.gov.dm
Website: www.dominica.gov.dm

4th Floor, Financial Centre
Kennedy Avenue
Roseau
Commonwealth of Dominica

February 8, 2019

H.E. Mr. Luis Almagro Lemes
Secretary-General
Organisation of American States
17th Street and Constitution Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Dear Secretary General,

I read with concern the message tweeted by you on the 7th of February, 2019 after you met with Mr. Crispin Gregoire, which reads as follows:



Luis Almagro
[@Almagro_OEA2015](#)

Today I met with Former Ambassador to [@UN](#), Crispin Gregoire, who expressed his concern that the upcoming elections in [#Dominica](#) are not free and fair. He also requested [@OAS_official](#) assistance to help ensure a level playing field in the country.

You are the head of the Organisation of American States, an organisation that the Government of Dominica has invited for the last two elections, to monitor our elections in Dominica. As with any system in the world, our electoral system is not perfect, but observers have consistently held that our elections are free and fair. Elections are again constitutionally due in the Commonwealth of Dominica in 2020.

Recommendations have been made for ways in which we can improve our electoral system, chief of which is through the introduction of voter identification cards and the revision of the voters list. The Electoral Commission approved a system for the introduction of these cards and the legislation for the introduction of those cards was drafted. All of the financial resources and man power requested by the Electoral Commission to effect the introduction of voter identification cards were provided by the Government, in a timely manner to the Commission.

The legislation was introduced to the Parliament in 2017. Concerns were raised by the opposition about particular clauses in the Bill dealing with the offences of bribery and treating. The Bill was withdrawn and the clauses were removed and brought back to Parliament again in 2018. Before Parliament sat to consider the Bill, a public consultation was convened by the Government with a wide range of stakeholders, including, all opposition Parliamentarians, private sector groups, unions, among others. The Chief Elections Officer, the Attorney General and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, discussed in detail the rationale for the introduction of the voter identification cards, the process to be followed for implementation and the legislative provisions were explained. There was opportunity for comments and questions. That event was carried live on radio and over the internet and the video of the consultation and the draft Bill, is available on the Government website for anyone interested, to review.

The opposition took the opportunity at the consultation to raise a different objection to the legislation. They have insisted that the Electoral Commission should not go overseas to our population centers, to allow citizens who are already on the voters list, to participate in the confirmation process and that confirmation should only be conducted in Dominica. The Government once more withdrew the Bill from Parliament for further consultation and invited citizens to forward any comments that they had on the Bill to the Attorney General. An application was also filed at Court seeking an injunction to prevent the Bill being tabled in Parliament.

The Electoral Commission has said very clearly on numerous occasions that they need the legislation passed in order to introduce voter identification cards, but there appears to be a concerted effort by opposition elements not to allow that to happen, on spurious grounds. The introduction of the cards would also allow, through the confirmation process, a revision of the voters list.

The right to vote is a right that has been hard fought for and no responsible government should arbitrarily take that right away from any citizen, notwithstanding the fact that they reside overseas, once they are not disqualified by law from participating.

It is clear that in posting this tweet, you Mr. Secretary General are endorsing and giving credence to unsubstantiated complaints made to you, without giving the Member State whom you represent even the simple courtesy of an opportunity to respond. Is that what we as Member States can expect from you as your new modus operandi.

We demand that you immediately take down that tweet, which is inaccurate, false and misleading and tender an appropriate apology and clarification that this does not represent a conclusion by the Organisation of American States.

Yours truly,


.....
FRANCINE BARON
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AND CARICOM AFFAIRS

cc. H. E. Carlos Alberto Calles Castillo, Chair of the Permanent Council