

# Press Release



## GECOM Chairman Proposed Digital Fingerprint Capture at Registration

7<sup>th</sup> February, 2025 GEORGETOWN – The Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) is particularly concerned about the grossly misleading headline article titled, **“No law preventing GECOM from employing digital fingerprinting at elections - but Chairman says time to introduce system too short”** which was published in the Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> February, 2025 edition of the Kaieteur News and attributed to the GECOM Chairman, Justice Claudette Singh. The headline is a total misrepresentation of the Chairman’s stated position on this very sensitive matter and therefore, carries potential to generate far-reaching consequences including, but not limited to, causing distrust and confusion among stakeholders.

In this regard, it is necessary for GECOM to clarify the Chairman’s position. It must be categorically stated that the Chairman’s articulation was specifically in relation to digital fingerprint capture during registration **and not elections**. Registration and election are two separate processes and, although connected, should not be confused with each other. In fact, while one process is the initiating and complementary phase to the other, there are distinctly separate laws guiding registration and elections.

Specifically, the Chairman stated that, “in outlining my position on the matter of digital fingerprint capture I had mentioned that **Section 9(1A) of the National Registration Act as amended by Act 14 of 2005** empowers the Commission to determine from time-to-time procedures for the acquisition and electronic processing of data. In this regard, I did say that it is obvious therefore that, there is nothing in the law or otherwise preventing the introduction of a system where such fingerprints are taken digitally, since it is the Commission that is empowered to determine such procedures.”

It is therefore against this backdrop that, it must be emphatically stated that the Commission stands by its decision that the Introduction of Biometrics at the Place of Poll requires Legislative Provisions and the consideration is only for capture of digital fingerprints during the registration process.

Having considered all the complexities, the Chairman suggested that since digital fingerprint capture is something new for GECOM, it would be necessary for the Commission to hire a suitable Technical Consultant to advise on the way forward to ensure that all of the bases are covered and that it is done in a comprehensive manner.

In summing up her position, Justice Singh advised that conceptualizing a project for digital fingerprint capture during voter registration should not be carried out simultaneously with preparations for the upcoming elections due to logistical challenges, technical considerations, political and social acceptance issues, together with costs. She explained that introducing a new technology like digital fingerprint capture during the election preparations, will add another layer of complexity that could strain resources and personnel.

In view of the foregoing, the Commission is encouraging media practitioners to ensure that they always seek clarity on issues and verify information to avoid the publication of misinformation and disinformation as these can have damaging consequences on individuals and organization as well as cause public distrust and confusion.

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