

BOTSWANA

Date of Elections: 20 October 1979

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the popularly-chosen members of Parliament on the normal expiry of their term of office.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Botswana, the National Assembly, has 37 members: 32 popularly elected, 4 specially elected or co-opted, and the Attorney-General, who sits *ex-officio* without the right to vote. The Speaker is in addition counted as a member if he is elected to this post and was not already a member of the Assembly. The life of the Assembly is 5 years.

Electoral System

All citizens of Botswana who are at least 21 years of age and who have either resided in Botswana for a continuous period of at least 12 months immediately preceding the date on which they apply for registration as voters or who were born in Botswana and are domiciled therein on the date of application are entitled to vote. No person is qualified to be registered as a voter if he is insane, owes allegiance to a foreign State, is under sentence of death or imprisonment of or exceeding six months, or is disqualified under any law relating to offences connected with the elections.

Electoral registers for each constituency are updated every three months by "supplementary rolls"; an amalgated "election roll" is in turn prepared, within each constituency, prior to each election. Voting is not compulsory.

Any qualified elector who is able to speak and read English well enough to take an active part in the proceedings of the National Assembly is qualified to be elected as a member of this House, unless he is an undischarged bankrupt. The parliamentary mandate is considered to be incompatible with membership of the House of Chiefs, certain public offices and an office connected with the elections.

Within his constituency, each candidate to the National Assembly must be nominated by two electors and supported by at least seven others. He must furthermore make a cash deposit which is returned to the candidate if he obtains one-twentieth of the total number of votes cast in his constituency.

For election purposes, Botswana is divided into 32 single-member constituencies. In each, that candidate who obtains the simple majority of the vote is declared elected.

By-elections are held to fill parliamentary seats which become vacant between general elections.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The 1979 general elections were the third such poll since the country attained full independence in 1966. Nomination day was held on 21 September 1979.

The ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) fielded candidates for all 32 elected seats. Its election manifesto, *inter alia*, declared a continued opposition to apartheid in South Africa and called for economic sanctions against Rhodesia.

Polling day was marked by a large turnout following an extensive Government campaign to improve voter participation. The BDP heightened its dominant position in the National Assembly.

On 23 October, Sir Seretse Khama was sworn in as President of the Republic for a fourth five-year term. He announced his Cabinet the same day.

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the National Assembly

Number of registered electors.	230,000 (approx.)
Voters.	134,000 (58%) (approx.)
Valid votes.	133,196

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained		Number of Seats of Popularly-Elected Members
Botswana Democratic Party . . .	32	100,398	75.4	29 (+ 2)
Botswana National Front	16	17,480	13.1	2 (=)
Botswana People's Party	14	9,983	7.5	1 (- 1)
Botswana Independence Party . .	5	5,057	3.8	- (- 1)
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