

CAMEROON

Date of Elections: 1 March 1992

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in Parliament following its premature dissolution by 13 months. General elections had previously been held in April 1988.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Cameroon, the National Assembly, comprises 180 members elected for 5 years.

Electoral System

All citizens of Cameroon who have reached the age of 20 and have not been disqualified by law are entitled to vote. The name of each citizen who is permanently domiciled, or has lived for at least six months, in a particular constituency may be entered on the electoral list of that same constituency. Members of the armed forces are registered where based notwithstanding the residence requirement. Disqualified from voting are persons convicted of a felony, those sentenced to certain terms of imprisonment, persons under warrant for arrest, undischarged bankrupts, persons convicted of offences against the security of the State and the insane. Electoral lists are drawn up at the local level and revised annually. Voting is not compulsory.

All registered electors at least 23 years old by the date of the elections, who are able to read and write English or French, may be candidates for the National Assembly. Ineligible are persons under allegiance to a foreign State. Membership of the National Assembly is incompatible with the office of member of the Government or of the Economic and Social Council, or senior officer of a public or para-public body. Members of the armed, security and police forces may not stand for election during the discharge of their duties and for six months following the termination of their status as such.

Lists of candidates must be submitted at least 40 days prior to election day, accompanied by a deposit of Francs CFA 150,000 per candidate, reimbursable if the party list obtains at least 5% of the votes cast at the national level.

Within the 49 departmental constituencies any legally existing political party is entitled to present a list with as many candidates as seats to be filled. Election is based on simple majority in single-member constituencies, and on absolute majority in constituencies where the list system is applicable. If no list obtains an absolute majority, the one with the highest number of votes is allocated half of the seats; the remainder is allocated to the other best-placed lists through proportional representation. Lists obtaining less than 5% of the votes cast are not eligible for

proportional distribution. Seats are awarded to candidates in the order in which they appear on each party list.

Vacancies arising between general elections are filled through by-elections held within a period of 12 months. No such elections are held when vacancies arise less than one year before the end of the National Assembly's term.

Background and Outcome of the Elections

In April 1991, President of the Republic (since 1982) Paul Biya announced that general elections would take place before the end of the year. In October, in response to demands for a postponement by principal opposition parties, a new, later date (subsequently pushed back by two weeks) was set and the National Assembly adopted legislation stipulating that its term of office, which was due to expire in April 1993, would end in early 1992.

The general elections were the first since the introduction of multipartyism in December 1990. Main challengers to the ruling Democratic Rally of the Cameroonian People (RDPC) were the National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP) led by Mr. Bello Bouba Maigari; the Cameroon People's Union (UPC), headed by Mr. Frederic Kodock; and the Democratic Movement for the Defense of the Republic (MDR). Altogether 751 candidates from 32 parties contested the Assembly's 180 seats, 16 other groups (especially the coalition Social Democratic Front) having decided to boycott the elections. During the two-week campaign, debate focused on central issues such as the country's economy although regional and tribal rivalries also played a significant part. Rejection of the opposition's call for an antecedent national conference which would, *inter alia*, draft a new Constitution had set off a series of strikes and demonstrations in the months prior to the polling.

Witnessed by international observers, voting took place in an atmosphere of relative calm. With a total of 88 seats, the RDPC remained the largest party in Parliament but fell three short of an absolute majority. Strong regional voting patterns gave the UNDP a general success in the north and the UPC a number of seats in the central part of the country. Given this overall result, Mr. Simon Achidi Achu (RDPC) was appointed Prime Minister on 9 April. He announced the composition of his RDPC-MDR Cabinet the same day.

Statistics

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

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| Number of registered electors. | 4,019,562 |
| Voters. | 2,435,443 (60.59%) |
| Blank or void ballot papers. | 238,200 |
| Valid votes. | 2,197,243 |

* See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections and Developments XXV* (1990-1991), p. 9.

| Political Group | Number of Candidates | Number of Seats |
|---|----------------------|-----------------|
| Democratic Rally of the Cameroonian People (RDPC) | 180 | 88 (-92)* |
| National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP) | 167 | 68 |
| Cameroon People's Union (UPC) | 94 | 18 |
| Democratic Movement for the Defense of the Republic (MDR) | | |
| Others | 278 | |
| | | <u>180</u> |

* The RDPC was formerly the sole legal party.

2. *Distribution of Deputies according to Profession*

| | |
|------------------------------------|------|
| Teachers | 34 |
| Businessmen | 30 |
| Civil servants | 19 |
| Engineers, technicians | 12 |
| Private sector managers | 10 |
| Municipal administrators | 9 |
| Farmers | 9 |
| Doctors | 8 |
| Pharmacists | 4 |
| Others | 12 |
| | 152* |

3. *Distribution of Deputies according to Sex*

| | |
|-----------------|-----|
| Men | 158 |
| Women | 22 |
| | 180 |

* Data on remaining 28 members unavailable.

4. Distribution of Deputies according to Age

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| 26-31 years | 7 |
| 31-36 | 17 |
| 36-41 | 21 |
| 41-46 | 35 |
| 46-51 | 28 |
| 51-56 | 27 |
| 56-61 | 29 |
| 61-66 | 8 |
| 66-71 | 6 |
| 71 and over | 2 |
| | 180 |