

GABON

Date of Elections: February 25, 1973

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held to renew all the members of the National Assembly, prematurely dissolved on February 4, 1973. Presidential and legislative elections were not normally due until March **1974**.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Gabon, the National Assembly, consists henceforth of 70 members* elected for 7 years.

Electoral System

All citizens of Gabon of either sex who are 21 or over and in full possession of their civil and political rights, who have resided for 6 months — until March 31 of the current year — in a particular constituency, and who are registered on the electoral lists are entitled to vote. In certain cases, the age for being elector may be lowered to 18. Foreigners fulfilling the necessary conditions may also vote provided they were domiciled in Gabon on August 17, 1960, and have since that date maintained this domicile.

The names of convicted criminals (including those found guilty *in absentia*), those who have been sentenced to imprisonment for more than 1 month for certain offenses against property, or for more than 3 months for other offenses, the insane, undischarged bankrupts, and persons under guardianship cannot, however, be entered on the electoral lists. The right to vote is suspended for persons who are under personal restraint pursuant to judicial and administrative decisions. Certain individuals convicted of offenses resulting in prison terms ranging from 1 to 3 months, or in fines exceeding Francs CFA 200,000 cannot, for their part, be registered for 5 years from the date when the judgment in their case has become final.

Electoral lists are drawn up at the level of the district or commune. They are considered as permanent and are revised annually, from December 1 to March 31. Voting is compulsory.

Candidates for election to Parliament must be members of, and put forward by, the single political party in the country, be at least 25 years of age and fulfil the conditions required for voting. Certain high officials of the Government, armed forces, police, judiciary and public enterprises are not eligible for a period of 6 months after occupying these posts. The office of Deputy is

* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 5.

incompatible with membership in the Government, the Supreme Court or the Economic and Social Council, any non-elective public office, employment remunerated by a foreign State or international organization, and the position of executive or consultant of State-subsidized enterprises.

Candidatures must be deposited with the Supreme Court at least 15 days prior to the election, accompanied by a deposit of Francs CFA 100,000. No candidature can be withdrawn once a list has been submitted.

Deputies are elected in a single constituency comprising the entire national territory, on the basis of the party-list majority system without preferential vote. They are elected at the same time and appear on the same list as the President of the Republic. The list of candidates must contain as many names as there are seats to be filled. A corresponding number of substitutes are elected at the same time as the titular Deputies. In case of any vacancy, if the substitute is incapacitated, by-elections are held.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

On February 4, 1973, President of the Republic Albert-Bernard Bongo dissolved Parliament and announced the scheduling of premature presidential and legislative elections for February 25. In the same broadcast message, he explained his programme for "national unity" and social and economic development based on his "realistic liberal regime", which had enabled Gabon to achieve the "highest transformation in its history" during the past 5 years. He also declared that the new Assembly would be expanded from 49 members to 70.

In accordance with the law, the election campaign opened 14 days prior to election day. The 70 candidates appeared on the list of the country's sole political party, the *Parti démocratique gabonais*, which had derived its status in 1968 through a presidential decree which stated that the Party would be the guarantee of national unity and of the abolition of ethnic discrimination.

President Bongo, himself re-elected on February 25, reorganized his Government on March 8, increasing its membership from 24 to 26 and appointing 3 new Ministers.

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections

Voters	529,828
Blank or void ballot papers . .	2,091
Votes in favor of the list of the <i>Parti démocratique gabonais</i> .	527,737 (99.6 %)