GABON

Dates of Elections: 17 February and 3 March 1985

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for the 111 elective seats in Parliament on the normal expiry of the members' term of office.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Gabon, the National Assembly, comprises 120 members; of these, 111 are elected* and 9 (one per province) are appointed by the Head of State.

Electoral System

All citizens of Gabon who are at least 21 years of age, in full possession of their civil and political rights and registered as electors are entitled to vote unless disqualified by law or court decision (insanity, bankruptcy, conviction, etc.).

Electoral registers are deemed permanent and revised annually. Voting is compulsory, unjustified abstention being punishable by a fine.

Candidates for election to Parliament must be qualified electors, at least 28 years of age and members of the country's sole political organization, the *Parli democratique gabonais* (PDG). Ineligible are certain high officials of the Government and members of the armed forces. The offices of Deputy is incompatible with membership of the Government, the Supreme Court, the Economic and Social Council, and employment remunerated by a foreign State or international organization.

Deputies are elected in two stages. The first, known as a "primary election" in each constituency, is based on indirect election by a college of Party officials and voting for a single member, each candidate being nominated along with his substitute. The second stage election is characterized by universal direct suffrage and blocked party list majority voting at the provincial level. Only those candidates who have obtained the most votes at the first stage may participate in the second.

Parliamentary vacancies which arise between general elections are filled by the substitutes chosen at the same time as titular Deputies.

•See section *Parliamentary Developments,* **p. 10.**

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

General elections for the National Assembly had previously taken place in February 1980, when 89 Deputies had been elected. Since then, the Assembly had been enlarged to 111 elective seats.

The 1985 election dates were set on 28 December 1984. In accordance with the electoral system, the sort of primary elections open to a restricted electorate comprising members of various structures of the ruling *Parti democratique gabonais* (PDG) were held on 17 February. The primaries were marked by a record number of candidatures, ranging to nine for one seat in certain constituencies. Those who succeded as a result of this first round of voting included 35 incumbents. At the second ballot on 3 March, when the population as a whole was called upon to ratify the PDG candidates, voter turnout reached nearly 96%.

In a post-election speech on 12 March, President of the Republic Bongo, in power since 1967, reiterated his opposition to multi-partyism which was, in his view, synonymous with political instability. He stressed, however, that the PDG was not "a static and dogmatic party" and that it could accept expression of all opinions within its framework. On the same occasion, President Bongo launched an appeal to the youth of the country to learn new skills, which were "indispensable for national reconstruction".

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors.	.807,241
Voters.	.771,651 (95.59%)
Blank or void ballot papers.	3,977
Valid votes.	.767,674
Voles in favour of the Parti democratique gabonais (PDG).	.767,674

Political Group	*f* ~
Parti democratique gabonais (**PDG**).	.120

2. *Distribution of Deputies according to Sex*

Men.	**.103**
Women.	.16
	119*

•Plus one vacancy.

3. *Distribution of Deputies according to Age Group*

20-30 years.	.7
30-40 ».	**36**
40-50 ».	52
50-60 ».	.21
60-70 ».	.3
	119*

•Plus one vacancy.