

# GAMBIA

**Date of Elections:** 29 April 1992

## **Purpose of Elections**

Elections were held for all the elective seats in Parliament on the normal expiry of the members' term of office. General elections had previously been held in March 1987.

## **Characteristics of Parliament**

The unicameral Parliament of Gambia, the House of Representatives, consists of:

- 36 "elected members";
- 5 "Chiefs' representative members";
- 8 "nominated members" appointed by the President of the Republic;
- the Speaker, elected by the House, who may either have been a member of it or not, but may not be a Minister or Parliamentary Secretary;
- the Attorney-General, who sits *ex officio*.

Only the elected members, Chiefs' representative members, and the Attorney-General have the right to vote.

All members of the House have a 5-year term of office.

## **Electoral System**

**In** order to be able to vote for elected members, any citizen of Gambia must be registered on the electoral rolls, be at least 21 years of age, and a resident for at least six months of the constituency in which he is registered. No person under allegiance to a foreign State, insane, or serving a sentence of imprisonment is qualified, nor are Head Chiefs. Chiefs' representative members are elected exclusively by the Head Chiefs.

The electoral registers of each constituency are revised in each "general registration year", i.e. at least every eight years; supplementary registration is carried out in the intervening years. Voting is not compulsory.

Any citizen at least 21 years of age, who can speak English well enough to take an active part in the proceedings of the House and who is qualified as an elector may be a candidate for election as an elected member. Undischarged bankrupts, persons under a sentence of death, those serving, or having in the preceding five years served, a sentence of imprisonment of at least six months and those party to certain government contracts are ineligible. For Chiefs' representative members, the same qualifications and disqualifications apply as for elected members, except that candidates for election as Chiefs' representative members need not qualify as electors.

Every candidate for election must be nominated by at least three voters of the same constituency and make a monetary deposit of 200 *dalasis*, which is reimbursed if he is successful or obtains at least one-fifth of the votes cast for the elected candidate.

Gambia is divided into 36 electoral constituencies, the boundaries of which are fixed by a presidential commission. In each of these, a single Deputy is elected by simple majority vote. Votes are cast by ballot tokens dropped through a hole next to the candidate's picture.

Chiefs' representative members must be approved unanimously by the Head Chiefs from a list proposed by them; if they are not so approved, they are selected on the basis of simple majority.

A by-election is held to fill any seat of an elected member or a Chiefs' representative member which becomes vacant between general elections.

**Background and Outcome of the Elections**

The President of the Republic, Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara, announced the polling date on 14 February 1992. Three days later, the House of Representatives was dissolved.

A record 130 candidates vied for the 36 directly elected seats, with the ruling People's Progressive Party (PPP) being the only one to contest all constituencies. It was challenged by four groups, particularly the National Convention Party (NCP), led by Mr. Sheriff Mustapha Dibba. The opposition largely focused its campaign on corruption and mismanagement of the economy by the PPP, but the latter countered by, *inter alia*, promising to improve the tourism industry as well as the lot of the country's groundnut farmers, adversely affected by low world prices. President Jawara, who had announced his retirement at the December 1991 PPP congress, subsequently changed his mind and ran for his sixth term since taking office in 1970 (he had been Prime Minister on independence in 1965).

Buttressed by this candidacy in the simultaneous presidential contest, the PPP secured a clear parliamentary victory albeit with a reduced margin, as the NCP advanced to six seats; independents (including former PPP supporters) were for their part successful in three constituencies. Some political observers attributed PPP's losses to its failure in accelerating the pace of development in the country.

On 11 May, President Jawara, having won over 58% of the popular vote, was sworn in. He announced the composition of his reshuffled Cabinet the next day.

**Statistics**

*1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the House of Representatives*

Number of registered electors. . . . .	400,000 (approx.)
Voters. . . . .	55.8% (approx.)

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Number of Seats
People's Progressive Party (PPP)	<b>36</b>	<b>25 (-6)</b>
National Convention Party (NCP)	<b>33</b>	6(+1)
Gambia People's Party (GPP)	17	<b>2 (+2)</b>
People's Democratic Party (PDP)	<b>19</b>	-
People's Democratic Organization for Independence and Socialism (PDOIS)	14	-
Independents	II	<b>3 (+3)</b>
		36 <sup>^</sup>

\* Directly elected members only.

## 2. Distribution of Representatives according to Sex

Men . . . . .	47
Women . . . . .	4
	51