

PANAMA

Date of Elections: 6 May 1984

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats of the new Parliament approved by popular referendum in April 1983*.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Panama, the Legislative Assembly, comprises 67 members elected for 5 years**.

Electoral System

Under the 1983 Constitution, candidates for the Legislative Assembly must be at least 21 years of age, Panamanian citizens by birth or having acquired such nationality since at least 15 years, and residents of the constituency where running for a minimum of one year immediately preceding the polling date. Disqualified are persons convicted (accompanied by a detention order) of offences against the public administration or election-connected offenses. The parliamentary mandate is incompatible with remunerated public employment except for certain high-ranking posts.

For election purposes, each administrative district within the country's nine provinces having more than 40,000 inhabitants comprises one constituency. Each constituency elects one representative per 30,000 inhabitants and an additional one for every fraction over 10,000. The district of Panama comprises four electoral constituencies. Election of Assembly members is based on a system of proportional representation. Vacant seats are filled by substitutes, two of whom being chosen for each titular member.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The parliamentary polling was held simultaneously with Panama's first direct presidential elections since 1968. Main contenders in the presidential race were Mr. Nicholas Ardito Barletta, candidate of the National Democratic Union (UNADE) and Mr. Arnulfo Arias Madrid of the conservative Democratic Opposition Alliance (ADO). A total of 14 parties fielded candidates for the Legislative Assembly seats.

*See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections and Developments XVII (1982-1983)*, p. 12.

**See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 19.

On 9 May, Mr. Ardito Barletta - who had campaigned, *inter alia*, on the promise to promptly tackle the country's economic problems - was declared the winner of the presidential contest by a slim margin by the Supreme Election Tribunal; his term of office was to commence on 11 October 1984. The UNADE also came out on top in the parliamentary polling.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors	917,677
Voters	66% (approx.)
Political Group	Number of Seats
National Democratic Union (UNADE) .	40
Democratic Opposition Alliance (ADO)	<u>27</u>
	67