

SWAZILAND

Date of Elections: 27 October 1978

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for 50 members of the new bicameral Parliament provided for by the October 1978 Constitution*. Previous general elections had taken place in May 1972.

Characteristics of Parliament

The bicameral Parliament of Swaziland consists of the House of Assembly and the Senate.

The House of Assembly comprises 50 members; 40 of these are elected by an Electoral College of tribal community delegates, and 10 are appointed by the King. The Attorney-General is also a member but has no vote. The Speaker and Deputy Speaker, elected by the House, may be chosen either from its own members (other than the Attorney-General, Ministers or Deputy Ministers) or from among persons who are not members but are qualified to be such.

The Senate consists of 20 members. Ten are elected by the House of Assembly and 10 are appointed by the King. The President and Deputy President of the Senate are chosen either from among the Senators who are not Ministers or Deputy Ministers or from among persons who are not Senators.

The term of office of all parliamentarians is 5 years.

Electoral System

All citizens who are at least 18 years of age are entitled to vote for members of the Electoral College in the tribal community (*tinkhundla*) where they ordinarily reside or work. Employers are obliged to release their employees in order for them to exercise this right. The insane and persons under sentence of death or imprisonment exceeding six months may not vote or be eligible for nomination as a delegate to the Electoral College.

Each *tinkhundla* nominates from two to four candidates for the Electoral College, each of these having been compelled to receive the support of at least five persons. Two of these candidates are then elected as delegates.

At the first meeting of the Electoral College, nomination of candidates for election to the House of Assembly takes place. The two delegates of each *tinkhundla* nominate not more than two candidates; no nomination is valid unless it is supported by five other members of the College.

* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 31.

Election of Assembly members is held within five days after the completion of nominations. If not more than 40 persons have altogether been nominated, the Chief Electoral Officer declares them as duly elected members of the House of Assembly. When there are more than 40 nominations, but only 40 candidates have received an absolute majority of College votes over all the candidates, they are for their part declared elected. If more than 40 candidates receive a majority of votes, such candidates who have an absolute majority over all the votes are declared elected; if the number of successful candidates so declared is less than 40, a fresh election for the remaining vacancies is held.

Disqualified or ineligible for election are persons under allegiance to a foreign State, holders of public office, members of the Electoral College, undischarged bankrupts, the insane, persons under sentence of death or imprisonment exceeding six months, and certain persons who had previously been imprisoned.

Senators are elected through majority vote of House of Assembly members present and voting.

Both Assembly and Senate vacancies are filled through by-elections.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

Following the May 1972 general elections, King Sobhuza II repealed the Constitution, suspended all political activity and took over all judicial, legislative and executive powers in April 1973. In March 1977, the King announced the abolition of the parliamentary system and its replacement by a system of government based on traditional tribal communities (*tinkhundla*). A new Constitution was promulgated in October 1978.

In October 1978, an estimated 55% of the eligible electorate chose, in 40 constituencies, an Electoral College of 80 members from among 160 candidates. This College met shortly thereafter to elect 40 members of the House of Assembly.

No campaign for the College seats was apparently held, names of candidates reportedly not being revealed until the opening of the polling stations. No political parties were allowed.

The new Parliament held its inaugural session on 19 January 1979. The same day, King Sobhuza II reappointed Major General Mphevu Dlamini as Prime Minister. The composition of the new Cabinet was announced on 12 February.