

ZAIRE

Dates of Elections: October 15 and 16, 1977

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament following the premature dissolution of this body. The fundamental reason for this dissolution was to adapt the Legislative Council to the reforms aimed at enhancing democracy in the country which the President of the Republic announced on July 1, 1977.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Zaire, the Legislative Council, comprises 272 members (*Commissaires du Peuple*, or "People's Commissioners") elected for 5 years. According to the 1978 Constitution*, 30 Political Commissioners (*"Commissaires Politiques"*), members of the Political Bureau of the People's Revolutionary Movement, are for their part *ex-officio* members of the Legislative Council; 18 of them are elected by universal suffrage and 12 are nominated by the President of the Republic. These 30 members may participate in parliamentary discussions but have no voting rights.

Electoral System

Under the terms of the 1977 Electoral Law*, all citizens of Zaire aged 18 years or more who have resided in a constituency for at least one year may vote in that same constituency if they are not, on election day, imprisoned, confined because of mental derangement, undischarged bankrupts, under allegiance to a foreign State or residing abroad. Persons responsible for a serious breach of Party discipline in the last five years and those dismissed from, or demoted while holding the rank of officer in, the armed forces during the last 10 years are also disqualified.

Electoral registers are revised before each election at the level of the local community or zone. Voting is compulsory.

Qualified electors (including persons residing abroad) at least 25 years of age are eligible for the Legislative Council. Ineligible are persons convicted and receiving certain sentences involving hard labour or penal servitude, and those detained after being similarly sentenced. The parliamentary mandate is

* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 14.

incompatible with a number of high-ranking public posts, the office of judge, all elective public offices, membership of the armed forces, functions exercised under the jurisdiction of foreign States or international organizations, and directorship of State enterprises.

Candidates must belong to the *Mouvement populaire de la révolution* (MPR), the country's sole political party, and must deposit a sum of 100 *zaïres*, which is not reimbursed. Candidatures are retained by the Political Bureau of the MPR after its examination of recommendations sent up by local and regional units of the MPR.

In the 1977 elections, members of the Legislative Council were chosen from 100 constituencies. In each, the citizenry selected a number of People's Commissioners, based on the constituency's population, who appeared on the list of candidates drawn up by the MPR, election being by categorical ballot and simple majority vote.

Substitutes elected at the same time as titular parliamentarians fill any Council seats which fall vacant between general elections. By-elections are held if the list of substitutes is exhausted.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

On July 1, 1977, President of the Republic Mobutu Sese Seko announced far-reaching plans to restructure the country's Government in order to democratize national politics and decentralize public administration and economic management. He set the schedule for a series of direct elections from the municipal to national level; parliamentary elections were governed by a new Electoral Code promulgated on July 18, 1977, which stipulated that deputies would be directly elected by universal suffrage.

The 272 Legislative Council seats were contested by some 2,080 candidates who had to pledge their support for the *Mouvement populaire de la révolution* (MPR), the country's only authorized political group which stands for national unity, opposition to tribalism and African socialism. The MPR Political Bureau's elected members were chosen on October 23. General Mobutu was himself re-elected President for a new seven-year term in December.

Statistics

1. Distribution of Seats in the Legislative Council

Political Group	Number of Seats
<i>Mouvement populaire de la revolution (MPR)</i>	272

2. Distribution of People's Commissioners according to Professional Category

Businessmen, tradesmen.123
Civil servants.	94
Farmers.	35
Manual workers.12
Lawyers.8
	272

3. Distribution of People's Commissioners according to Sex

Men.	267
Women.	5
	272