

# PANORAMA OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 2007

AN ANNUAL PUBLICATION OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

*"In any State the authority of the government can only derive from the will of the people as expressed in genuine, free and fair elections held at regular intervals on the basis of universal, equal and secret suffrage."*

- Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections,  
unanimously adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Council at its 154th session (Paris, 26 March 1994)

This issue of the Panorama provides an overview of all direct elections to single, lower and upper chambers of national parliaments in 2007. It presents a snapshot of the world's parliamentary elections in images and figures, and highlights electoral events of particular interest or significance.

## 2007 AT A GLANCE

- ❖ Direct elections were held in 55 countries for 62 parliamentary chambers.
- ❖ 10,291 of the world's 44,714 parliamentary seats were renewed through direct elections.
- ❖ Women won over 1,500 of these seats.
- ❖ Increases in the number of women were registered in more than 50 per cent of renewed chambers for which comparable data was available.
- ❖ Ten countries reported voter turnout greater than 80 per cent, whereas turnout was below 50 per cent in seven countries.
- ❖ The worldwide average for voter turnout was 65.34 per cent, a decrease of 2.52 percentage points compared to 2006.
- ❖ In twenty-seven countries, the ruling party was returned to power (62.8 per cent of the 43 countries where alternation can be explained in political party terms). In another 8 countries (18.6 per cent), the composition of the ruling coalition was modified.
- ❖ Only 8 countries (18.6 per cent) voted the ruling party out of power.
- ❖ One country, Thailand, returned to normal constitutional rule. Elections were held in the country for the first time since the 2006 military coup.

All figures are based on data available on 29 February 2008.

## ELECTORAL SNAPSHOTS



A woman casts her vote at a polling station in Nasarawa, Nigeria, 21 April 2007.

Commonwealth Secretariat/Julius Mucunguzi

A man prepares his vote during the Moroccan legislative elections in the shanty town of Sidi Boumen near Casablanca, 7 September 2007.



AFP Photo/Philippe Desmazes



Ballots are counted during parliamentary elections in Ireland, 24 May 2007.

OSCE/Holly Ruthraff



## RECENT PARLIAMENTARY DEVELOPMENTS

Elections for the 480 seats of **Thailand's** new House of Representatives were held in December 2007. The adoption of a new constitution in August 2007 had paved the way for fresh elections.

More than 72 percent of Thailand's 45 million registered voters took part. The results gave the People's Power Party (PPP), led by supporters of the ousted former prime minister Mr. Thaksin Shinawatra, 232 seats. The PPP formed a six-party coalition that held 313 of the 477 seats endorsed by the electoral commission to date.

Parliamentary elections were held in **Sierra Leone** in August in parallel with presidential elections. They witnessed the first peaceful transition of power since the end of the civil war that lasted from 1991 to 2002.



Preparation for parliamentary elections in Timor-Leste.

UN Photo/Steve Tickner

Turnout was recorded at nearly 76 per cent, with many people waiting for hours in the rain to cast their ballots. The main opposition party, the All People's Congress (APC), won the majority of seats (59 of 112) and power passed peacefully from the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party to the APC. Sixteen women (14.3 per cent) were elected to parliament. In the run-off presidential election held in September, Mr. Ernest Bai Koroma, leader of the APC, was elected with 54 per cent of the votes.

Parliamentary elections were held in **Timor-Leste** in June for the first time since the country became an independent State in 2002. Eighty per cent of registered voters participated. No party won a clear majority. Elected President in May, Mr. José Ramos-Horta faced a political stalemate before appointing the former president and leader of the national independence movement, Mr. Xanana Gusmão, as Prime Minister with the support of a coalition in parliament.

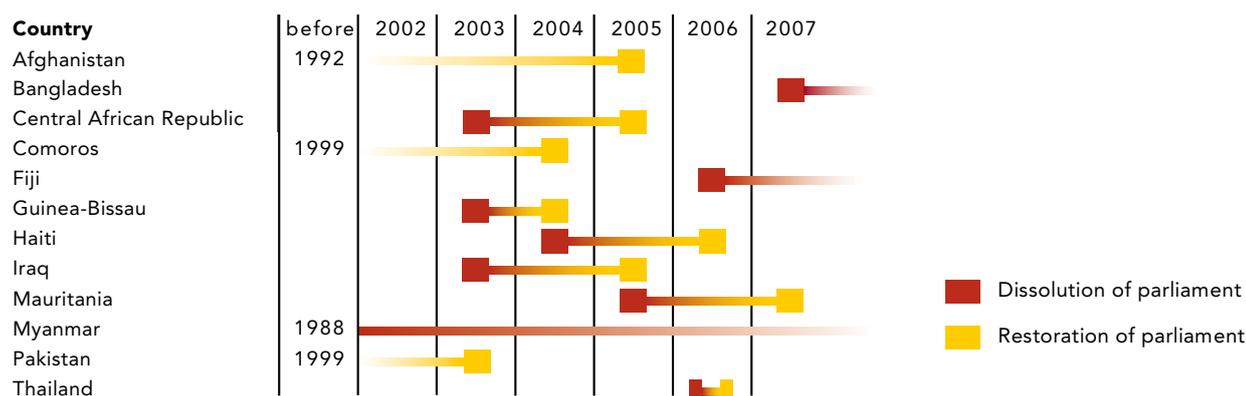
At the end of 2007, **Bhutan** took a significant step in its process of democratization by holding nationwide elections for the first time, to the newly-established National Council, the Upper Chamber. Elections to the Lower Chamber, the National Assembly, are scheduled for March 2008. Members of that chamber will ultimately be responsible for adopting a new constitution, which will end 100 years of absolute monarchy.

The National Council is a non-partisan body composed of 25 members. In the December election, 43 people contested 15 of the 20 elected seats in the Council. Elections to the remaining five seats were delayed due to a shortage of candidates. Candidature requirements include a university degree, which is held by only 2.5 per cent of the country's 634,000 inhabitants.

Fifty-five per cent of Bhutan's 270,000 registered voters turned out on election day. At least 11 elected members were under 40 years old, and three were women. A fourth woman was elected in January 2008.

Elections in **Bangladesh**, initially scheduled for January 2007, were postponed by the interim caretaker government. As a result there is no functioning parliament. However, the Constitution stipulates that the Speaker continues to hold office until his successor takes office.

### Countries without a functioning parliament, 2002-2007



## ELECTORAL ISSUES

In **Nigeria**, elections took place after a year of political turmoil following the Senate's rejection in May 2006 of proposed constitutional amendments that would have allowed the outgoing president to run for a third term.

Presidential and parliamentary elections drew more than 35 million of the country's 60 million registered voters to the polls. Both presidential and parliamentary elections were won by the ruling party. The elections marked the first transfer of power between civilian presidents since the country gained independence in 1960.



AFP Photo/Eitan Abramovich

Indigenous peasants participate in the general elections in Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala, 9 September 2007.

Poverty and crime were the main election issues in **Guatemala**, which has the highest murder rate in Latin America. At least 50 people were killed during the election campaign, making it the bloodiest since the civil war ended in 1996. Victims included the 14 year-old daughter of one candidate and an assistant to one of the vice-presidential candidates. Despite the violence, more than 60 per cent of registered voters were drawn to the polls.

Participation in the war in Iraq was a key election issue in both **Australia** and **Poland**, where opposition parties pledged a partial or full withdrawal of their troops from Iraq.

Voters in **Iceland** and **Australia** weighed the often competing demands of stimulating economic growth and protecting the environment.

A campaign poster of the right-wing Swiss People's Party sparked controversy by showing a black sheep being kicked out of **Switzerland** by three white sheep, symbolizing the party's platform on immigration. Voter turnout was the highest in 24 years (48.3 per cent). The Swiss People's Party won the largest share of seats in the National Council since the country's proportional voting system began in 1919, but its leader failed to win a seat in the new government.

## **A contested election in Kenya**



IRIN/Allan Gichig

People queue to vote in the elections in Kenya, 27 December 2007.

Turnout was reportedly high in Kenya's presidential and parliamentary elections held in December. The opposition Orange Democratic Movement party, led by presidential candidate Raila Odinga, became the largest political force in the newly-elected National Assembly, narrowly ahead of President Mwai Kibaki's coalition. On 30 December, Kibaki was sworn in as President immediately after the Electoral Commission announced that he had been re-elected.

Opposition supporters responded by staging street protests in Nairobi that turned violent. A political stalemate developed and violence spread rapidly to other areas of the country. Some 1,000 people died as a result of election-related violence, including two opposition parliamentarians, and more than 250,000 people fled their homes.

## EARLY ELECTIONS

Early elections were favourable to the ruling parties in seven (58.3 per cent) of the twelve countries that called early elections in 2007.

The President of the **Seychelles** dissolved the National Assembly following opposition protests against the Assembly's decision to prohibit political parties and religious groups from obtaining radio broadcast licences. The elections, held seven months earlier than planned and attracting nearly 86 per cent of the registered voters, returned exactly the same party configuration to parliament.

In **Turkey**, the ruling party's choice for President led to a boycott of parliament by the country's largest secular party and triggered elections four months earlier than scheduled. The elections returned the ruling party to

government with a clear majority, and its presidential nominee was ultimately elected by the new parliament in the third round of voting.

The President of **Kazakhstan** called elections for August, more than two years before the official due date, because he wanted to implement the constitutional amendments passed in May 2007. These amendments increased the size of the House of Representatives and Senate and introduced a pure proportional representation system using political party lists, which meant that independent candidates could no longer stand for election. In the elections, the ruling "Nur Otan" party took 88 per cent of the vote. No opposition party surpassed the seven per cent threshold required to win a seat in parliament. Consequently, all seats in parliament went to the ruling party.

In **Denmark**, where parliamentary elections were called 15 months ahead of schedule, the Prime Minister won an unprecedented third term in office.

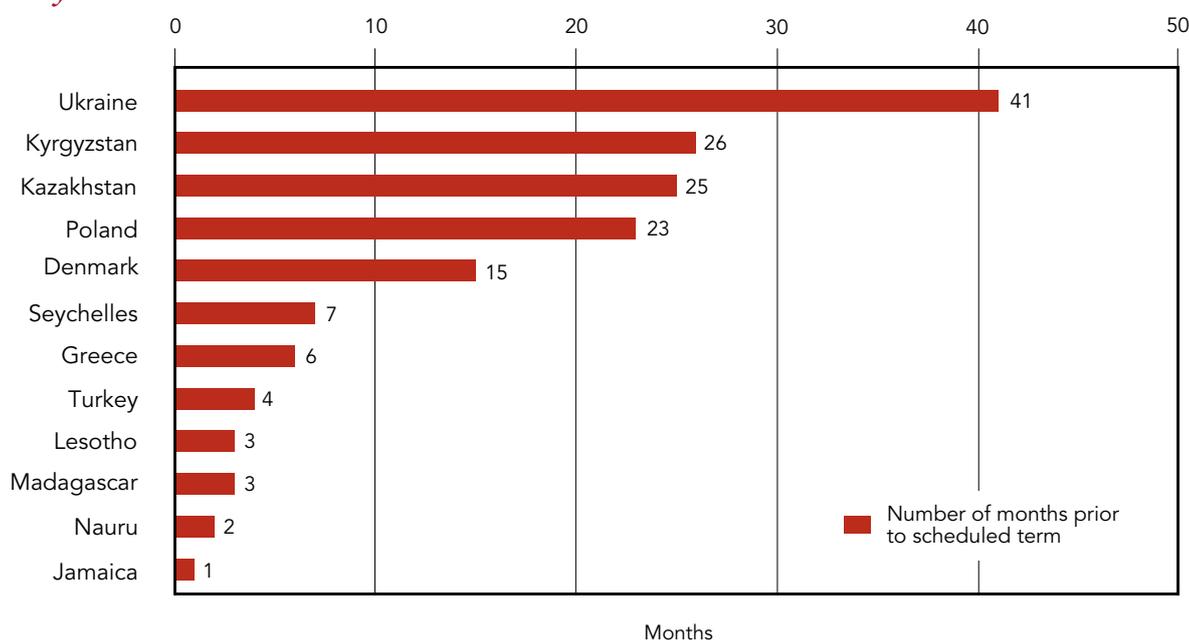
In **Ukraine**, elections due to be held in 2011 were brought forward to 2007 following a standoff between the President and parliament. The coalition of parties that had led the December 2004 Orange Revolution took a narrow majority to become the largest political force in parliament once again.

After the controversial dismissal of several ministers, the coalition government in **Poland** collapsed in August. As a result, elections were called 23 months earlier than scheduled, the eighth poll since the fall of Communism in 1989. The ruling party was forced to concede defeat to the Civic Platform party, whose candidate had been runner-up in the 2005 presidential elections.



OSCE/Jonathan Stonestreet  
Polling-station officials count ballot papers in the 22 July 2007 parliamentary elections in Turkey.

### Early Elections



## POWER SHIFTS

In a majority of countries that held elections in 2007, the ruling party remained in power. In only eight of the 43 countries (18.6 per cent) where alternation could be explained in political party terms, the ruling party was voted out of office.

In **Australia** Prime Minister Howard became the first incumbent prime minister since 1929 to lose his seat. He had headed four consecutive governments.

**Japan's** ruling party lost control of the Upper Chamber for the first time since the party's inception in 1955. The

president of the party remained Prime Minister, however, by virtue of the party's majority in the Lower Chamber.

With no clear majority established in the June parliamentary elections, **Belgium** went through a record-breaking 196 days without a government before an interim coalition government was formed in December.

New electoral systems often had a significant impact on election results. **Kyrgyzstan** adopted a proportional representation system that imposed a threshold of five per cent of votes nationwide and 0.5 per cent of votes

in each of the country's seven regions for a party to secure representation in parliament. As a result, although the main opposition coalition garnered 8.7 per cent of the votes nationwide in the December elections, it did not win representation in parliament because it failed to win 0.5 per cent of the vote in one region.

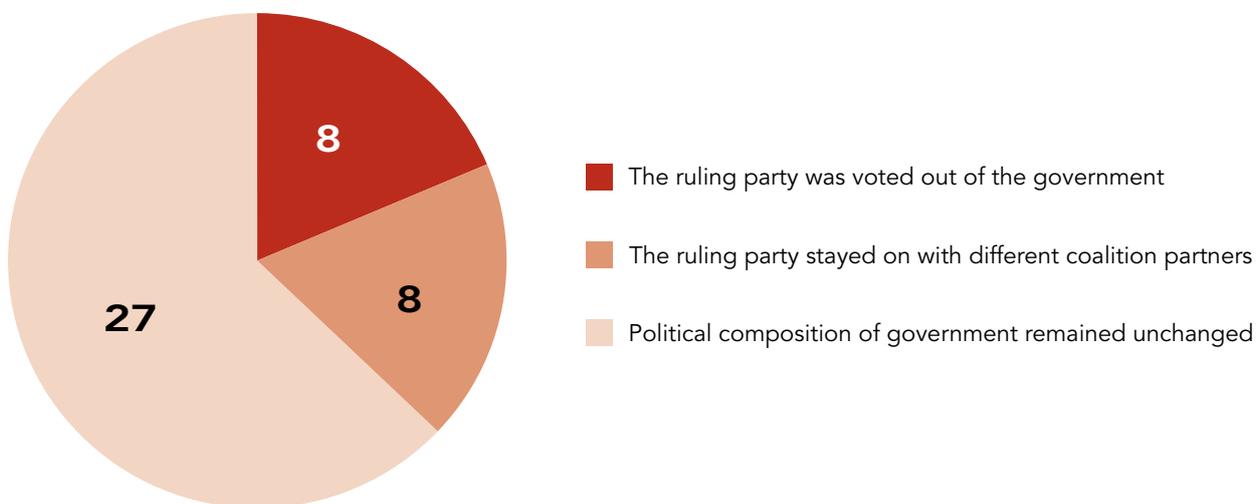
In the **Russian Federation**, the December elections were the first to be held under a purely proportional representation system. Under the new system, a party must win 7 per cent of the votes (up from 5 per cent) to obtain parliamentary representation. Although 35 parties applied to contest the elections, only 11 were registered by the Central Elections Commission. President Putin's United Russia party won 315 of the 450 seats of the State Duma. Three other parties also gained representation.



AFP Photo/Yoshikazu Tsuno

An elderly man casts a vote in Tokyo, Japan, 29 July 2007.

### *Alternation of power after elections in 43 countries*



**NOTE:** The graph represents only those countries where the alternation of power can be explained in political party terms. It therefore excludes 12 countries for various reasons: Belgium, Bhutan, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mali, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Oman, Serbia and Thailand.

## VOTER TURNOUT

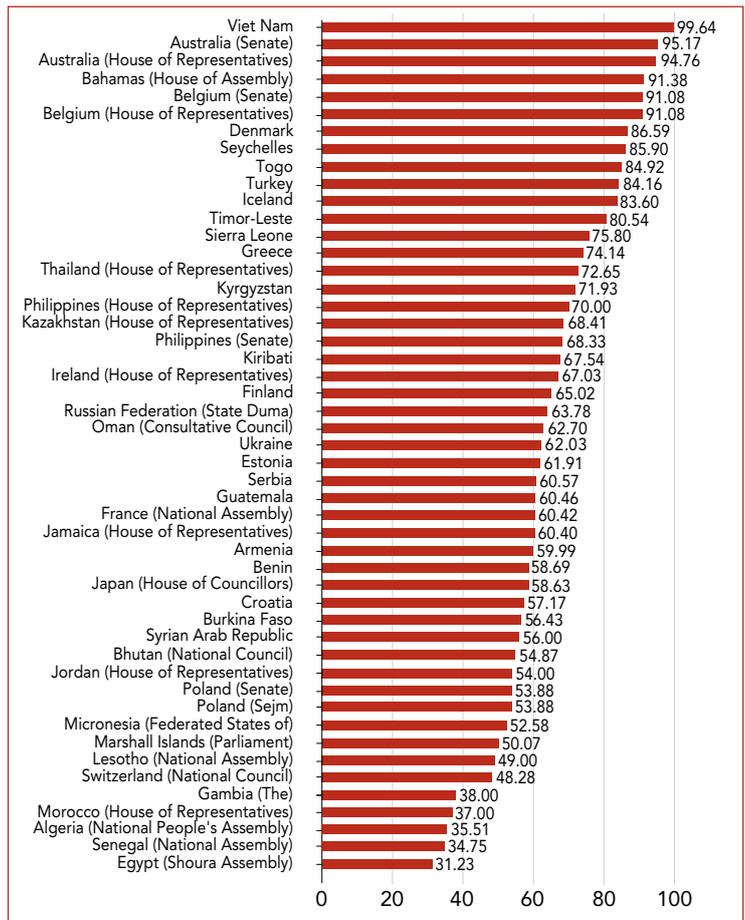
Voter turnout in 2007 ranged from 99 per cent in **Viet Nam**, where turnout is traditionally high, to 31 per cent in **Egypt** and just under 35 per cent in **Senegal**. In these two countries, opposition parties chose to boycott the elections. The election in Egypt was the first since constitutional amendments abolished judicial supervision of elections and banned political activities based on religion.

Nearly 85 per cent of eligible voters in **Togo** turned out on polling day. Organizing free and fair elections was seen as an important step in re-establishing the country's relationship with international partners, particularly the European Union, which had suspended its aid in 1993 because of its concerns about governance. For the first time in nearly two decades, no opposition party boycotted the elections.

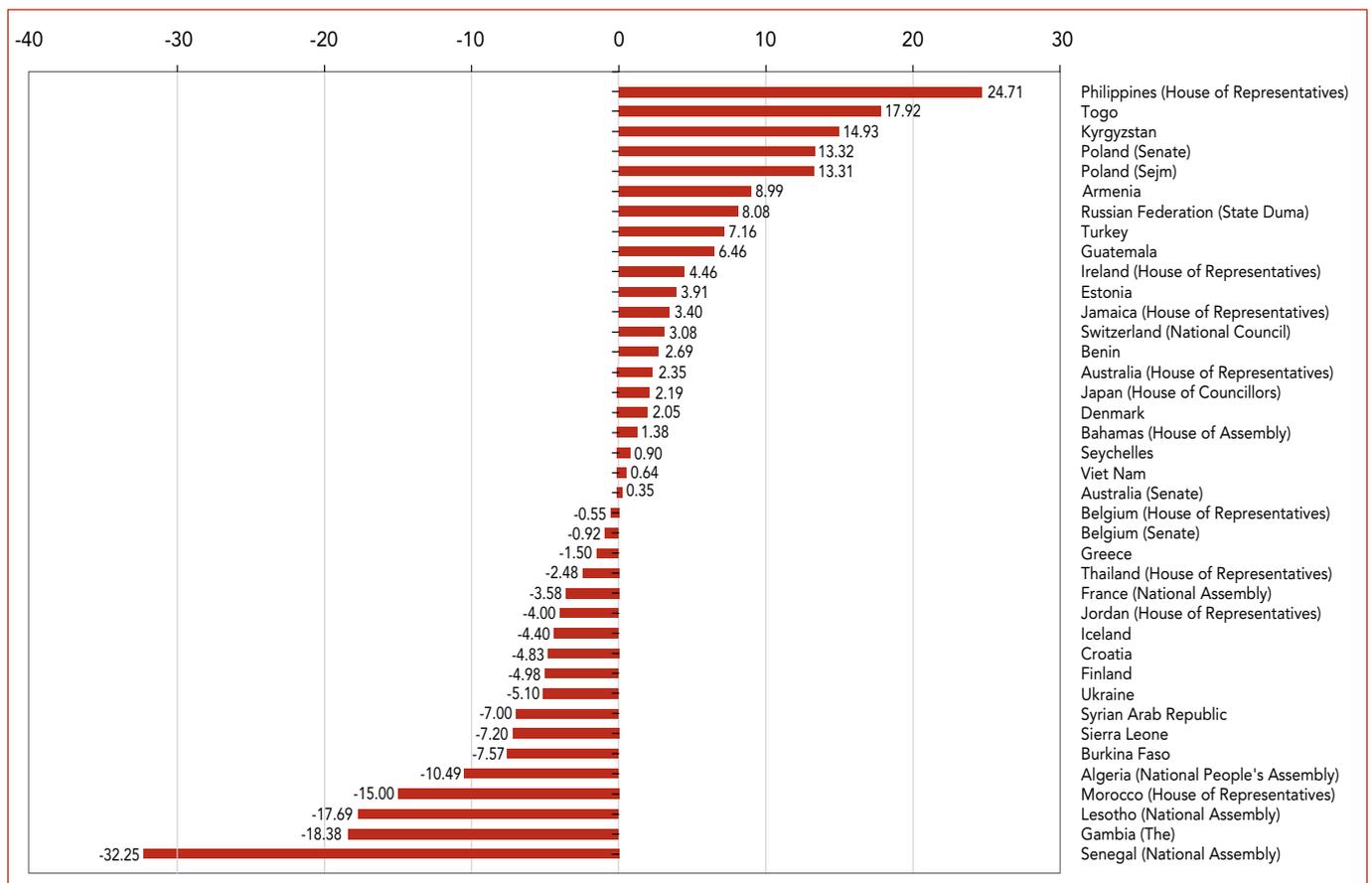
Three opposition parties boycotted elections in **Algeria**, arguing that elections held under a state of emergency had no legitimacy. Only 35 per cent of eligible voters took part in the poll.

A mere 37 per cent of registered voters took part in **Morocco's** parliamentary elections, despite the participation of 33 political parties and 13 groups of independent candidates. It was the lowest voter turnout in that country's history.

## Voter turnout, 2007 (Ballots cast/registered voters, per cent)



## Difference in turnout between 2007 elections and previous elections, per cent



## WOMEN IN ELECTIONS

At the end of 2007, women held 17.7 per cent of all parliamentary seats around the world, an increase of more than 50 per cent over their representation one decade ago.

Among the countries that held elections in 2007, women now represent 30 per cent or more of the membership of parliament in **Argentina, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland**. The highest ever number of women in Finland's history - 84 (42 per cent) - were elected to office, nine more than in the previous election.

In 2007, women gained more seats in elections using a proportional electoral system, 18.3 per cent, compared to 13.8 per cent for those elected with a majority (first-past-the-post) or plurality electoral system.

The largest percentage-point gain in 2007 - from zero to 25 per cent - was registered in **Kyrgyzstan**. In the previous election, held in 2005, the number of women plummeted to zero as the country moved from a bicameral to a unicameral parliament with a majority electoral system. In 2007, the number of seats in the chamber was increased from 75 to 90, and seats were filled from party lists using a proportional representation electoral system. Under that system, parties were required to ensure that at least 30 per cent of the candidates on their lists were women.

In **Jordan**, one woman was elected in addition to the 6 elected under the quota system, while in **Turkey**, a record 50 women were elected, up from 24 in the previous elections held in 2002.

The lowest return rate for women in 2007 was registered in the Pacific Islands States, at less than two per cent on average.

Two women were successful in **Kiribati**, one in the **Marshall Islands**, and one in **Papua New Guinea**. No women won seats in the elections in the **Federated States of Micronesia**, which, like **Nauru**, have never had a female parliamentarian.

For the first time in 13 years, no woman was elected to the Consultative Council in **Oman**. Twenty-one women contested the election, up from 15 in the previous election held in 2003, but none was successful. Oman gave women the right to vote and run for office in 1994, thereby becoming the first Gulf State to do so.



A woman is helped by a member of the polling staff to cast her vote at a polling station in Freetown, Sierra Leone, 11 August 2007.

IRIN/Tugela Fidyel



A Thai election official holds up a ballot paper while counting votes, 23 December 2007.

AFP Photo/Muhammad Sabir

## Scope

This publication covers all direct parliamentary elections in 2007, held upon the normal expiry of the term or dissolution of the parliament/parliamentary chamber. It does not cover indirectly-elected or appointed parliamentary chambers. Information is provided on presidential elections only when they were held concurrently with parliamentary elections.

In direct elections, the personal vote of individual citizens determines who will be their elected representatives. In indirect elections, members of an electoral college (whose composition varies from country to country) elect the representatives on behalf of the citizens.

All data in the Panorama of Parliamentary Elections is drawn from the IPU's PARLINE database on national parliaments. PARLINE contains information on the structure, composition and working methods of each parliamentary chamber in all countries where national parliaments exist. It also contains data on parliamentary elections.

All figures are based on data available on 29 February 2008. Data has been cross-checked with parliaments to the greatest extent possible.

## Explanatory notes

**Voter turnout:** This is calculated as the percentage of voters to registered electors. Voters include those who cast blank or invalid ballots. Those countries for which turnout figures were not available were excluded.

No comparison is made with previous elections for the newly-established Bhutanese Upper Chamber, and for Serbia and Timor-Leste, which held their first-ever parliamentary elections as new nations. Statistics are taken from the IPU's PARLINE database.

**Power shifts:** Three patterns of alternation in government are considered: *wholesale alternation*, where the main ruling party leaves the government, *partial alternation*, where it remains in power, but with different partner(s), and *no alternation*, where the political composition of the government does not change. The graph represents only those countries for which alternation in government can be explained in political party terms.

**Members elected:** These statistics do not include data from by-elections unless the by-elections were held to fill seats that had remained empty after the main parliamentary elections.

## Further reading

Detailed information on every parliamentary election in 2007 can be found in the PARLINE database and its print companion, the *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections*.

A comprehensive overview of women in parliament in 2007 is available in the publication, *Women in Parliament in 2007: The Year in Perspective*.

All these publications, and many more, including the *Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections* and the study entitled *Free and Fair Elections*, can be accessed, downloaded or ordered through the IPU website: [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org)

## About the IPU

Established in 1889, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the international organization of parliaments of sovereign States. In February 2008, the national parliaments of 146 countries were Members of the IPU. Seven regional parliamentary assemblies are Associate Members.

The IPU helps resolve conflicts, reverse the global democracy deficit and strengthen the credibility of the institution of parliament.

It promotes peace through parliamentary dialogue and diplomacy, and promotes democracy through action programmes designed to strengthen parliaments, defend human rights and promote gender equality and women's participation in political life.

The IPU shares the objectives of the United Nations and works closely with United Nations agencies. It also works with regional inter-parliamentary organizations and with international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations that are motivated by the same ideals.

## DIRECT ELECTIONS FOR PARLIAMENTARY CHAMBERS IN 2007

Country (chamber)	Date of Elections
Algeria (National People's Assembly)	17 May
Argentina (Chamber of Deputies)	28 October
Argentina (Senate)	28 October
Armenia	12 May
Australia (House of Representatives)	24 November
Australia (Senate)	24 November
Bahamas (House of Assembly)	2 May
Belgium (House of Representatives)	10 June
Belgium (Senate)	10 June
Benin	31 March
Bhutan (National Council)	31 December
Burkina Faso	6 May
Cameroon	22 July
Congo (National Assembly)	24 June and 5 August
Croatia	25 November
Denmark	13 November
Egypt (Shoura Assembly)	11 and 18 June
Estonia	4 March
Finland	18 March
France (National Assembly)	10 and 17 June
Gambia (The)	25 January
Greece	16 September
Guatemala	9 September
Iceland	12 May
Ireland (House of Representatives)	24 May
Jamaica (House of Representatives)	3 September
Japan (House of Councillors)	29 July
Jordan (House of Representatives)	20 November
Kazakhstan (House of Representatives)	18 August
Kenya	27 December
Kiribati	22 and 30 August
Kyrgyzstan	16 December
Lesotho (National Assembly)	17 February
Madagascar (National Assembly)	23 September
Mali	1 and 22 July
Marshall Islands	19 November
Micronesia (Federated States of)	6 March
Morocco (House of Representatives)	7 September
Nauru	25 August
Nigeria (House of Representatives)	21 April
Nigeria (Senate)	21 and 26 April
Oman (Consultative Council)	27 October
Papua New Guinea	30 June and 10 July
Philippines (House of Representatives)	14 May
Philippines (Senate)	14 May
Poland (Sejm)	21 October
Poland (Senate)	21 October
Russian Federation (State Duma)	2 December
Senegal (National Assembly)	3 June
Serbia	21 January
Seychelles	10 and 12 May
Sierra Leone	11 August
Switzerland (National Council)	21 October
Switzerland (Council of States)	21 October
Syrian Arab Republic	22 April
Thailand (House of Representatives)	23 december
Timor-Leste	30 June
Togo	14 October
Trinidad and Tobago (House of Representatives)	5 November
Turkey	22 July
Ukraine	30 September
Viet Nam	20 May

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