

## CAMEROON

**Date of Elections:** 24 April 1988

### **Purpose of Elections**

Elections were held for all the seats in Parliament on the normal expiry of the members' term of office\*.

### **Characteristics of Parliament**

The unicameral Parliament of Cameroon, the National Assembly, comprises 180 members\*\* elected for 5 years.

### **Electoral System**

All citizens of Cameroon who have reached the age of 21 and have not been disqualified by law are entitled to vote. The name of each citizen who is permanently domiciled, or has lived for at least six months, in a particular constituency may be entered on the electoral list of that same constituency. Members of the armed forces are registered where based notwithstanding the residence requirement.

Disqualified from voting are convicted criminals, certain persons under personal restraint, persons under warrant for arrest, undischarged bankrupts, persons convicted of offences against the security of the State and the insane.

Electoral lists are drawn up by the administrative authorities and revised annually. Voting is not compulsory.

All registered electors at least 23 years old by the date of the elections, who are able to read and write English or French, may be candidates for the National Assembly. Ineligible are persons under allegiance to a foreign State. Membership of the National Assembly is incompatible with the office of member of the Government or of the Economic and Social Council, or senior officer of a national public body. Members of the armed, security and police forces may not stand for election during the discharge of their duties and for six months following the termination of their status as such.

\* The elections took place following a decision to shorten the term of the National Assembly by one month. This decision was taken by law in order to bring the parliamentary mandate in line with the presidential mandate. The term of the former Assembly - elected on 29 May 1983 - should have ended on 29 May 1988.

\*\* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 9.

List of candidates must be submitted at least 15 days prior to election day, accompanied by a deposit of Francs CFA 150,000 per candidate, reimbursable if the party list obtains at least 25% of the valid votes cast.

A July 1987 amendment to the Electoral Law\* entitled any legally existing political party, within 49 departmental constituencies, to present one or several lists, each including as many candidates as seats. This was later limited to two lists per constituency having several seats and to two candidates per one-seat constituency. Prospective candidates were required to avoid "accumulating the duties of a Deputy with other duties already held, either within the party, or within a traditional framework, or outside the party". Election is based on simple majority.

Vacancies arising between general elections are filled through by-elections held within a period of 12 months. No such elections are held when vacancies arise less than one year before the end of the National Assembly's term.

### **Background and Outcome of the Elections**

The election date was set on 18 March 1988. Polling for the enlarged National Assembly was scheduled simultaneously with that for President of the Republic, the latter election having been advanced by eight months.

The electoral campaign opened on 11 April. In the presidential race, Mr. Paul Biya, in office since November 1982, ran unopposed for a second five-year term under a manifesto promising economic and political reform. With respect to the Assembly seats, the country's electorate, for the first time since independence in 1960, had a choice of candidates, although all were members of the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (RDPC), the sole political party that was renamed in 1985. After an initial screening of over 1,000 candidates, 324 (of whom only 58 incumbents) appearing on two different lists were retained by the Party for the 180 seats. Debate centered largely on the policies to overcome the economic crisis caused by the drop in world prices of Cameroon's main export products, including petroleum.

Polling day was generally calm and marked by a large turnout. Final results produced an 85% change in the Assembly's membership, as many "old guard" Deputies were defeated. President Biya announced the composition of the new Cabinet on 16 May.

\* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 9.

## Statistics

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

Number of registered electors. . . . .	3,634,568	
Voters. . . . .	3,282,884	(90.3%)
Blank or void ballot papers. . . . .	103,026	
Valid votes. . . . .	3,179,858	

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Number of Seats
Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (RDPC)*. . . . .	100	100**

\* Renamed in March 1985; previously the *Union nationale camerounaise* (UNC).

\*\* 60 seats added since last elections.

2. *Distribution of Deputies according to Profession*

Civil servants. . . . .	88
Farmers. . . . .	28
Businessmen. . . . .	22
Liberal professions. . . . .	14
Academics. . . . .	4
Pensioners. . . . .	24
	180

3. *Distribution of Deputies according to Sex*

Men. . . . .	154
Women. . . . .	26
	180

4. *Distribution of Deputies according to Age*

23-30 years. . . . .	10
31-40 ». . . . .	50
41-50 ». . . . .	55
51-60 ». . . . .	52
61 and over. . . . .	13
	180