COLOMBIA

Date of Elections: 14 March 1982

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in Parliament on the normal expiry of the members' term of office. General elections had previously been held on 26 February 1978.

Characteristics of Parliament

The bicameral Parliament of Colombia, the Congress, consists of a Senate and a House of Representatives.

The Senate is composed of two Senators for each of the country's 22 departments and one more for each 200,000 inhabitants or for each fraction of more than 100,000 inhabitants that the department has above the first 200,000.

The House of Representatives is composed of two Representatives for each department and one more for each 100,000 inhabitants or for each fraction of more than 50,000 inhabitants that the department has above the first 100,000.

The March 1982 elections were for 114 Senators and 199 Representatives, all elected for 4 years.

Electoral System

All Colombian citizens at least 18 years of age who are registered as electors in their municipality and have not been deprived of their civil or political rights have the right to vote. Members of the armed forces on active duty and of the police force are debarred from participating in the poll. Voting is not compulsory.

All electors who are at least 25 years of age and have never been condemned for a non-political offence involving corporal punishment are eligible for the House of Representatives.

To run for the Senate, a candidate must, in addition to the last condition mentioned above, be at least 35 years of age*, Colombian by birth and have held certain high offices (President or Vice-President of the Republic, member of Congress. Cabinet Minister, head of a diplomatic mission, Governor of a department, judge of a higher court. Councillor of State, Attorney General of the nation. Comptroller General of the Republic, university professor for at least five years) or have undertaken a liberal profession with a university degree.

Representatives and Senators are elected in each constituency on the basis of a closed-list proportional representation system. A total of 22 constituencies consist of a single department; other less-densely populated regions are grouped together to form four more constituencies.

An alternate is elected alongside each Representative or Senator to replace either of the latter in the event of their resignation or death between general elections.

* See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections and Developments XV* (1980-1981). pp. 11-12.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

In the March 1982 elections, the centrist Liberal party *(Partido Liberal)* retained majority control in both Houses of the national Congress as well as in most of the country's regional assemblies and municipal councils. The Liberals emerged victorious even though the vote for the party was divided between two rival slates of candidates, one loyal to former President of the Republic Alfonso Lopez Michelsen and the other to Senator Luis Carlos Galan, who described himself as a New Liberal; both of these planned to run in the 30 May presidential elections, Mr. Lopez Michelsen having been officially designated as the Liberal candidate.

Opposing the Liberal Party were the Conservative Party *(Partido Conservador),* headed by Mr. Belisario Betancur, and a small left-wing coalition led by Mrs. Consuelo de Montejo. The three major candidates endorsed similar policies and programmes, including increased social measures. One major difference was that the Conservatives opposed proposals to legalize divorce.

Statistics

1. *Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the Congress*

Voters. . . . . .45% (approx.)

Political Group	Number of Seats in the House of Representatives	Number of Seats
Liberal Party.	**114**	62
Conservative Party.	84	51
Leftist groups.	1	1
I	199	**114**