

PANORAMA OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 2006

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)

The *Panorama of parliamentary elections 2006* provides an overview of all direct elections to single, lower and upper chambers of national parliaments in 2006. It presents a snapshot of the world's parliamentary elections in images and figures, highlighting electoral events of particular interest or significance.

One of the year's highlights was undoubtedly the first multiparty elections in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** in more than 40 years. For most of the time President Mobutu was in power (1965-1997), only one political party existed and could field candidates at elections. The transitional parliament appointed in 2003 oversaw the adoption of a new constitution and electoral law. In July 2006, after numerous postponements, 24 million registered voters were able to choose freely from among 9,709 candidates contesting the 500 parliamentary seats at stake in the National Assembly.

Despite the considerable logistical challenges, and with the support of more than 17,000 United Nations troops, the elections went relatively smoothly. Seventy per cent of registered voters took part. In all, 69 political parties won seats in the National Assembly. Forty-two women (8.4%) were elected, less than the 12 per cent of women in the outgoing Transitional National Assembly. The establishment of the new parliament was completed in January 2007 with indirect elections to the Senate, marking an important step on the road to democracy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

2006 AT A GLANCE

- ❖ Direct elections were held in 44 countries for 52 parliamentary chambers.
- ❖ 8,263 of the world's 43,719 parliamentary seats were renewed through direct elections.
- ❖ Women obtained 1,459 of these seats. Increases in the number of women were registered in more than 60 per cent of the chambers that were renewed.
- ❖ More than 400,000,000 people voted in parliamentary elections, around one in 16 of the world's estimated population of 6.5 billion people.
- ❖ The parliaments of Thailand and Fiji were dissolved as a result of military coups.
- ❖ 9 of the 44 countries recorded voter turnouts of over 80 per cent.
- ❖ 20 countries returned their governments to power. In 9 countries, the ruling parties left office following parliamentary elections.

ELECTORAL SNAPSHOTS



UN Photo/Kevin Jordan

Lycee Moliere Polling Station in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo.



OSCE/Urdur Gunnarsdotir

Voters cast their ballots in Golubovci during parliamentary elections in Montenegro.



AFP Photo/Jennifer Del Castillo

An indigenous woman votes at a polling station in Cusco, Peru.

RECONSTRUCTION OF PARLIAMENTARY INSTITUTIONS

In **Haiti**, the first round of presidential and parliamentary elections was held on 7 February 2006. Parliament had ceased to function in January 2004, when the mandate of members of the Chamber of Deputies expired. After President Aristide was forced out of power in February 2004, a transition period began with international assistance. It culminated in the 2006 elections, at which, despite the unstable security situation, about 60 per cent of

voters turned out for the first round of voting. Claims and accusations of irregularities caused the second round of parliamentary elections to be postponed until 21 April 2006, where turnout was less than 30 per cent. Twenty-seven of 30 senators and 82 of 99 deputies were sworn in at the first session of parliament on 9 May. All but one of the remaining seats had been confirmed by December 2006.

European Union election observation mission



Voters take part in elections for the National Assembly of Mauritania, November 2006.

In **Mauritania**, elections for the National Assembly were held in two rounds, in November and December 2006. The bicameral parliament had been dissolved in August 2005 by the military junta that had deposed President Taya after his 20-year rule. A popular referendum on a new constitution was held in June 2006 and resulted in the presidential term being reduced to 5 years, renewable only once.

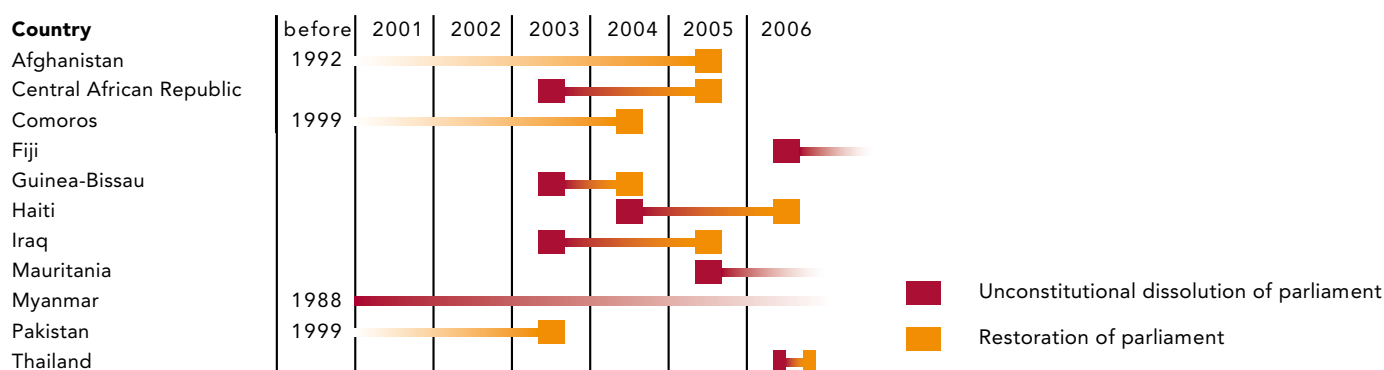
More than 70 per cent of registered voters participated in the parliamentary elections, which, as many international observers noted, passed off peacefully. The newly introduced 20 per cent quota for women candidates facilitated the election of 17 women to the 95-member chamber. Indirect elections to the Senate were held in January 2007. The period of emergency rule in Mauritania will come to an end when the bicameral parliament convenes after presidential elections in March 2007.

Parliament ceased to function or remained inactive in a number of countries in 2006. In **Thailand**, snap elections in April were widely boycotted, and many seats were left unfilled as a result of the opposition's tactics of "abstention". The elections to the House of Representatives were subsequently declared invalid by the Constitutional Court, although the Senate elections were validated. As a result, parliament was constitutionally unable to meet. The political stalemate was broken in September when a military coup removed the Prime Minister, dissolved parliament and appointed a transitional legislative assembly in its place.

The parliament of **Fiji** was also dissolved following a military coup in December.

There is no functioning parliament in **Myanmar**, where no elections have taken place since 1990.

Countries without a functioning parliament, 2001-2006

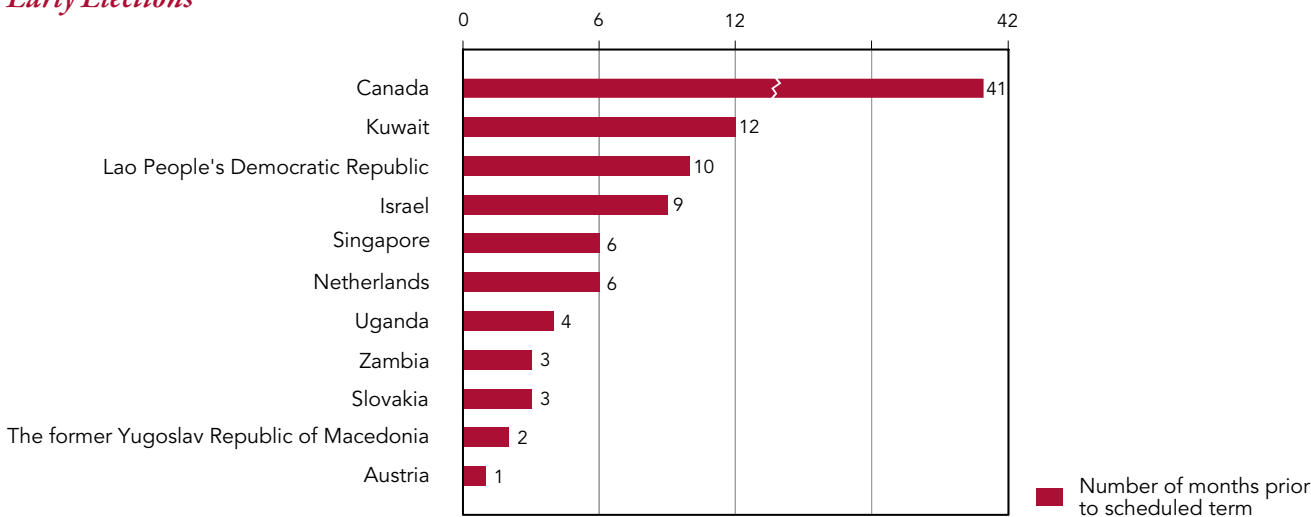


CONTEXT OF ELECTIONS

In **Cyprus**, elections for the 56 seats allocated to the Greek Cypriot community took place for the first time since the rejection of the UN-backed unification plan for the country in 2004. The 24 seats in the House of Representatives set aside for the Turkish Cypriot community have remained vacant since 1963.

The war in Iraq was a major issue in the **United States of America**, where the Republicans lost control of both chambers. Democrat Nancy Pelosi subsequently became the first woman Speaker of the House of Representatives. In several Latin American countries, free-trade agreements with the United States and relations with Venezuela

Early Elections



A new political party emerges in Israel

On 21 November 2005, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon decided to dissolve the 120-member parliament (Knesset). On the same day, he announced that he would leave the Likud party to found a new party, Kadima, that would pursue his plan for disengagement from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Although the plan was strongly opposed by a faction within Likud led by former Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, Mr. Sharon argued that it was necessary to establish a permanent border that would make Israel a State with a Jewish majority. Prominent figures, including former Labour Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Likud Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz, were among the first to join Kadima.

Mr. Sharon was permanently incapacitated by a major stroke in December 2005. The former Vice Prime Minister Ehud Olmert inherited Mr. Sharon's agenda and became the acting leader of Kadima. In the elections on 28 March 2006, Kadima became the largest party with 29 seats, while Likud was reduced from 38 to 12 seats. Labour and two other parties joined the new Kadima-led government.

figured prominently on the electoral agenda, while the status of migrant workers in the United States was a major issue in **Mexico**. In **Slovakia** and **Hungary**, economic reform was hotly debated in connection with those countries' future adoption of the euro.

Ethnic issues predominated in a number of countries. In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the Bosniak, Croat and Serb communities largely voted along ethnic lines, resulting in a fragmented parliament where 12 parties hold less than 10 seats each in the lower chamber.

Montenegro became independent from the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in June, and elections to the Montenegrin parliament took place on 10 September. The closely contested referendum on independence in Montenegro had highlighted splits between ethnic Montenegrins, largely in favour of independence and closer integration with Europe, and citizens of Serbian origin. The vigorous debate continued during the parliamentary election campaign, which focused on the reform of national institutions and the place of the country's different ethnic groups within the new nation.

Eleven countries held elections before the normal expiry of parliamentary terms. The elections in **Canada** took place almost three and a half years ahead of schedule, when the minority Liberal government was brought down in a vote of no confidence after the New Democratic Party withdrew its support. In Israel, a rift within the Prime Minister's party led to snap elections (see box). In **Slovakia** and the **Netherlands**, the collapse of the governing coalition resulted in the early dissolution of parliament.

In **Uganda** and **Zambia**, parliamentary elections were simply brought forward to coincide with the presidential elections. In the **Lao People's Democratic Republic** and **Singapore**, the ruling party decided to dissolve parliament, and the outgoing government was re-elected in both cases.

POWER SHIFTS

In the majority of elections in 2006, the major ruling party was returned to power. Only in nine countries was the major party in the outgoing government entirely voted out of office.

In **Sweden**, an alliance of centre-right parties brought 10 years of Social Democrat government to an end. In **Canada**, the Liberals were voted out and a new minority government was formed by the Conservatives.

In **Saint Lucia**, Sir John Compton, who was the country's first Prime Minister after independence in 1979, was returned to power for a third time.

In **Italy**, the seats reserved for Italians overseas played a decisive part in the outcome of the Senate elections, which finally secured a majority in both chambers for the government led by former Prime Minister Romano Prodi.

In the June lower chamber elections in the **Czech Republic**, the two major electoral coalitions both won exactly 100 seats. The first government proposed by the Civil Democrats failed to win a vote of confidence in parliament in October. A further three months of negotiations were needed before the Civil Democrats could form a government able to win a vote of confidence, and then only with the help of two members of the rival Social Democrat party.

Parliamentary elections also produced four cases of "partial change", where the main ruling parties stayed in government, but with different coalition partners.

In **Peru**, President Toledo's outgoing Peru Possible party was reduced from 45 to two seats in parliament, but remained in government thanks to its alliance with newly elected President García's American Popular Revolutionary Alliance.

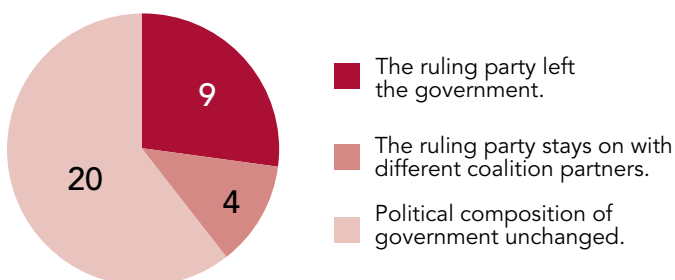
In addition to the Czech Republic, three other countries experienced lengthy coalition talks after inconclusive parliamentary elections. **Austria** returned to the era of grand coalitions between the conservative People's Party and the Social Democrats. In **Ukraine**, the 2004 Orange Revolution faded into the distance when the Our Ukraine party of the pro-European President finished only third in the elections. The pro-Russian opposition formed a coalition government that was briefly joined by Our Ukraine, which later again withdrew. In the **Netherlands**, the ruling Christian Democrats beat their rival Social Democrats in the November elections, but their traditional coalition partner only came in fourth. The search for a coalition agreement continued into February 2007.



AFP Photo/Sven Nackstrand

Swedes select ballots as they make advance voting in a library in Stockholm, 15 September 2006.

Alternation of power after elections in 33 countries

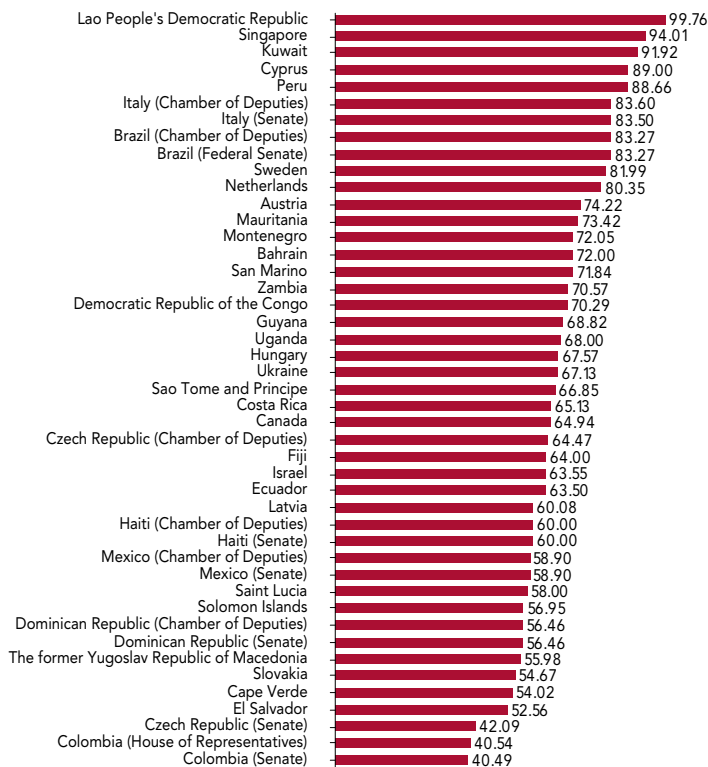


Note: The graph represents only those countries where the alternation in government can be explained in political party terms. It therefore excludes 11 countries: Montenegro (newly independent); Haiti and Mauritania (parliament was restored); Democratic Republic of the Congo (transition period ended); Kuwait, and Tuvalu (no party system existed in 2006); Ecuador and Solomon Islands (change was not linked to parliamentary parties); Bosnia and Herzegovina, Fiji and Israel (unstable composition of outgoing government).

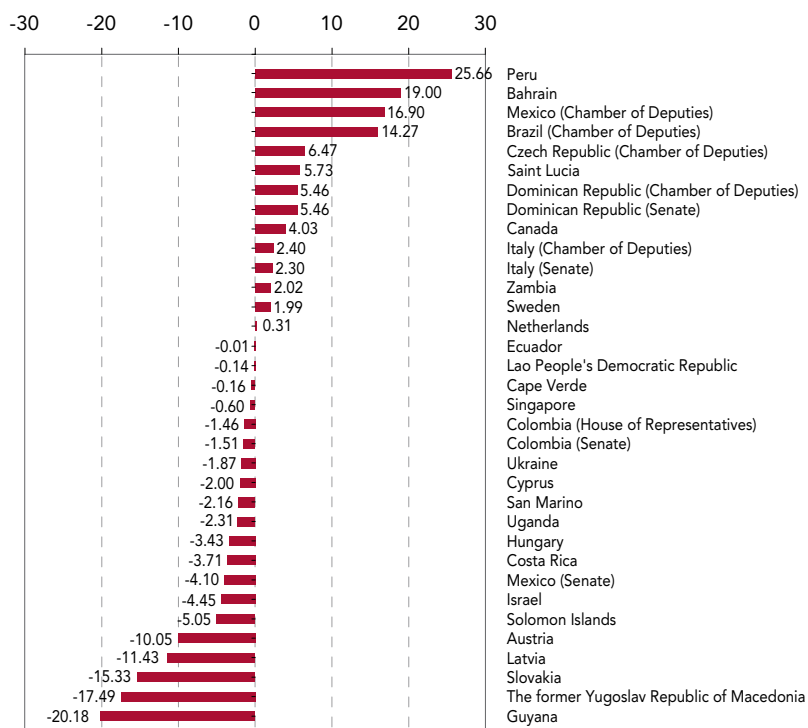
VOTER TURNOUT

Voter turnout in 2006 ranged from 40.49 per cent in **Colombia** to 99.76 per cent of registered voters in the **Lao People's Democratic Republic**. Of the six countries which reported turnouts of over 80 per cent in the last two elections, two used some form of compulsory voting.

Voter turnout, 2006 (Ballots cast/registered voters, per cent)



Difference in turnout between 2006 elections and previous elections, per cent



In some cases, voters had strong incentives to participate in elections. In **Singapore**, failure to vote results in the offender's name being removed from the electoral register. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, the only legal party, mobilized mass movements to encourage voting in an enthusiastic atmosphere.

Peru, where a sharp rise in voter turnout was recorded, recovered from historically low turnout figures at the previous elections.

In Colombia, where voter turnout was below 50 per cent for the second time in a row, the rebel Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) launched numerous attacks to discourage voters from going to the polls.

Turnout was once again low in Senate elections in the **Czech Republic**, which took place four months after the elections to the lower chamber. Many commentators felt that the elections could break the stalemate in the lower chamber, and the turnout in the first round was indeed higher than in 2004. It nevertheless remained below 50 per cent and dropped by half in the second round.

A drop in turnout of more than 20 percentage points was observed in **Guyana**, where opposition parties claimed that insufficient time was allowed for voter registration. In **Latvia**, **Slovakia** and **The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, voter turnout dropped by more than 10 percentage points, to the lowest level since independence.



Lao People's Democratic Republic: A couple and their daughter cast their ballots at a polling station in Vientiane, 30 April 2006.

WOMEN IN ELECTIONS

Increases in the ratio of women parliamentarians were recorded in 25 of the 44 lower or single chambers of parliament which held direct elections in 2006.

Sweden saw the largest proportion of women elected in 2006, with 47.3 per cent. Since 1994, more than 40 per cent of Swedish parliamentarians have been women, thanks to the use of voluntary quotas by some parties. In **Costa Rica**, 38.6 per cent of members elected to parliament were women. At the other extreme, in the **Solomon Islands, Tuvalu** and **Saint Lucia**, women again failed to win any parliamentary seats.

Of the 44 countries, 22 implemented special measures such as quotas. Costa Rica, where the electoral law obliges political parties to put female candidates in electable positions on their lists, produced a proportion close to the figure foreseen by the law (40%). In **Brazil**, on the other hand, although the law requires political parties to present 30 per cent female candidates on their lists, it allowed these lists to include up to 50 per cent more candidates than the total number of seats up for election. Not all parties complied and there were no sanctions in place. Voters could cast ballots for individual candidates on the list, and consequently there was little impact on the number of women elected.

Women also fared well in elections in countries where no special measures are in force. In the Senate of the **United States of America**, for example, women captured 24 per cent of the 33 seats up for renewal, making a total of 16 per cent female Senators.

Further analysis can be found in the IPU publication *Women in parliament in 2006: the year in perspective*.



Bahraini women listen to election debates in Manama, 20 November 2006.

AFP Photo/Karim Sahib

A woman shows her electoral card in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, 7 February, 2006.



AFP Photo/Walter Astrada

The challenge for women in the Arab Region

As reported in the 2005 *Panorama*, women in **Kuwait** were granted the right to stand and vote in elections in 2005. Because parliament was dissolved early, parliamentary elections were held one year earlier than expected. On 29 June 2006, 28 women and 222 men contested the 50 directly elected seats, which were all won by men.

The November 2006 elections were the second opportunity for **Bahraini** women to stand for election to win a parliamentary seat. One woman out of 18 women candidates was elected uncontested.

Elections were held in the **United Arab Emirates** for the first time ever in December. Sixty-five women contested the 20 seats in the Federal National Council up for election, and one woman was elected. Only 6,689 people, of whom 1,189 were women, formed the electoral college. The total population of the United Arab Emirates is estimated to exceed 4 million people, of whom around 80 per cent are non-nationals. The elections were described by the government as the first part of a three-phase process that would eventually see all Emiratis electing half of the members of an expanded Federal National Council with greater powers.

FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

Most elections in 2006 were monitored by observers from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, whose role is to verify conformity with international standards for free and fair elections and to identify areas for improvement in the electoral process. Several international observers stated that they were operating in compliance with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observers adopted by the United Nations in 2005.

The Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum Mission in **Zambia** found that the country's target for voter registration was not reached because the acquisition of a national registration card was a prerequisite for registration as a voter and the national registration centres were relatively inaccessible. On the positive side, multiple voting streams at polling stations, with a limited number of voters in each, speeded up the voting process.

The Carter Center condemned any effort by foreign governments to influence the outcome of the presidential and parliamentary elections in **Nicaragua**, and the European Union Election Observation Mission said that such interference was not consistent with respect for national sovereignty and the democratic process.



OAS observers were on hand for the August 28 general and regional elections in Guyana.

The Commonwealth Observer Mission in **Fiji** noted that the complexity of the "alternative vote" electoral system resulted in a large number of invalid votes. It also recommended that the country move away from the use of communal seats reserved on an ethnic basis towards more open seats, as specified in the Constitution of 1997.

Election authorities in both established and new or emerging democracies continued to seek innovative ways to encourage and facilitate participation in the electoral process. A few highlights:

In **Canada**, voter education materials were produced in 11 aboriginal languages and 26 languages from immigrants' countries of origin by Elections Canada.

In **The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, early voting was held in centres for internally displaced persons one day before the regular polling day. In addition, 1,592 sick and disabled persons who had filed a request with certified medical proof at least three days before election day were able to vote from home.

The **Netherlands** used information and communication technology to meet the logistical challenge of out-of-country voting. Voters living abroad were allowed to cast their votes on the Internet on an experimental basis. Some 30,000 of an estimated 600,000 Dutch expatriates registered to participate, and 17,000 votes were cast in this way.



OSCE/Úrdur Gunnarsdóttir

A future voter inspects election procedures at a polling station in Kyiv, Ukraine, during the 26 March 2006 parliamentary elections.

Return to a multiparty system: progress and challenges in Uganda

The first multiparty presidential and parliamentary elections in Uganda since 1980 were held on 23 February 2006. The two previous elections were held under the Movement System, where every Ugandan automatically belonged to the National Resistance Movement. Following a referendum held in July 2005, parliament passed a constitutional amendment prescribing a transition to a multiparty system.

The European Union Election Observation Mission indicated that a delay in the enactment of the new Political Parties and Organisations Act meant that only the National Resistance Movement was able to field candidates in all constituencies. It also reported that voters continued to confuse the Movement as a party label with the previous Movement System as a State organ.

There were changes in the system of reserved seats for women, with women representatives in each of the country's districts being elected directly rather than indirectly, and the number of districts being increased from 69 to 80. Elections were also held for 215 constituency-based seats and, in total, 99 women won seats in parliament.

SCOPE

This publication covers all direct parliamentary elections in 2006, held upon normal expiry of the term or dissolution of the parliament/parliamentary chamber. It does not cover indirectly elected or appointed parliamentary chambers per se. Information is provided on presidential elections only when they were held concurrently with parliamentary elections.

In direct elections, it is the personal vote of individual citizens that determines who will be their elected representatives. In indirect elections, it is members of an electoral college who elect the representatives on behalf of the citizens. The composition of the electoral college varies from country to country. For example, in French Senate elections, the electoral college is made up of members of regional and local councils.

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 9 February 2007. Insofar as possible, data has been cross-checked with parliaments.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Voter turnout: This is calculated as the percentage of voters to registered electors. Voters include those who cast blank or invalid ballots. Turnout figures were not available for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Gabon, Nicaragua, Samoa, Tuvalu, and the United States of America.

No comparison is made with previous elections if parliament had been dissolved or was in a transitional period. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and Mauritania are excluded for this reason. Statistics for previous elections 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 2006 can be found in the PARLINE database and its print version, the *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections*.

A comprehensive overview of the situation of women in parliament in 2006 is available in the publication, *Women in parliament in 2006: the year in perspective*.

All these publications and many more, including the Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections and the study on *Free and Fair Elections* can be accessed, downloaded or ordered through the IPU website, www.ipu.org

ABOUT THE IPU

Created in 1889, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the international organization of parliaments of sovereign States. In February 2007, the parliaments of 148 countries were members of the IPU. Seven regional parliamentary assemblies are associate members.

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

It promotes peace through parliamentary dialogue and diplomacy.

It promotes democracy through several action programmes 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 2006

Country (chamber)	Date of Elections
Austria	1 October
Bahrain	25 November and 2 December
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1 October
Brazil (Chamber of Deputies)	1 October
Brazil (Federal Senate)	1 October
Canada	23 January
Cape Verde	22 January
Colombia (House of Representatives)	12 March
Colombia (Senate)	12 March
Costa Rica	5 February
Cyprus	21 May
Czech Republic (Chamber of Deputies)	2-3 June
Czech Republic (Senate)	20-21 and 27-28 October
Democratic Republic of the Congo	30 July
Dominican Republic (Chamber of Deputies)	16 May
Dominican Republic (Senate)	16 May
Ecuador	15 October
El Salvador	12 March
Fiji	6 - 13 May
Gabon	17 and 24 December
Guyana	28 August
Haiti (Chamber of Deputies)	7 February and 21 April
Haiti (Senate)	7 February and 21 April
Hungary	9 and 23 April
Israel	28 March
Italy (Chamber of Deputies)	9-10 April
Italy (Senate)	9-10 April
Kuwait	29 June
Lao People's Democratic Republic	30 April
Latvia	7 October
Mauritania	19 November and 3 December
Mexico (Chamber of Deputies)	2 July
Mexico (Senate)	2 July
Montenegro	10 September
Netherlands	22 November
Nicaragua	5 November
Peru	9 April
Saint Lucia	11 December
Samoa	31 March
San Marino	4 June
Sao Tome and Principe	26 March
Singapore	6 May
Slovakia	17 June
Solomon Islands	5 April
Sweden	24 September
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	5 July
Tuvalu	3 August
Uganda	23 February and 28 August
Ukraine	26 March
United States of America (House of Representatives)	7 November
United States of America (Senate)	7 November
Zambia	28 September

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