

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PROFILE OF ZAMBIA

Zambia, which won its independence from Britain in 1964, has a population of approximately 7.3 million, speaking some 73 indigenous languages. English is the official language. Lusaka, the capital, has over 750,000 inhabitants. Zambia is a non-aligned country which enjoys good relations with states from both the Eastern and Western blocs as well as with other developing countries.

Political Situation

Zambia is a one-party parliamentary democracy with an executive presidency. Elections for both the one-chamber National Assembly and the presidency are held at five-year intervals. The last elections were held in October 1988. More than 300 candidates, all members of the ruling United National Independence Party (UNIP), contested the 125 elected parliamentary seats. Ten members of Parliament are nominated by the President. Although his position was uncontested, President Kaunda received widespread support in the presidential ballot. The highest policy-making body in the country is the UNIP Central Committee.

Zambia's main international concern has been the political situation in South Africa and southern Africa. This issue has been strongly brought into focus by President Kaunda in his role as Chairman of the Front-Line States. Zambia has given its support to Namibia's quest for independence. Both the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) and the African National Congress (ANC) maintain regional headquarters in Lusaka. President Kaunda speaks out against the South African government for acts of regional destabilization, including violations of its accord with Mozambique. He has called on Pretoria to stop military and psychological intimidation of neighbouring states. He advocates the imposition of economic sanctions by Western countries in an attempt to pressure the Botha government to abandon apartheid. At the same time President Kaunda urges the peaceful dismantling of apartheid and dialogue with South Africa.

Zambia is an active member of both the Organization of African Unity and the Non-Aligned Movement. It maintains friendly relations with the United States, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. Of late, Zambia has been looking increasingly towards Japan as a major customer for copper and a new source of development assistance. Regionally, Zambia participated actively in the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) and the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA).