



**JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ ISSUED AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE CONFERENCE:
DEEPENING VOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN AFRICAN DEMOCRACY**

7 - 10 June 2009

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Nairobi*

African Regional Programme (ARP)

1. At the invitation of the Centre for Multiparty Democracy Kenya in partnership with the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, some 60 delegates representing more than 20 political parties from 10 African states, met in Naivasha Kenya from 7-10th June 2009. Delegates represented both ruling and opposition parties in all of these countries and came from Burundi (observers); Ghana; Kenya; Malawi; Mali; Mozambique; South Africa; Tanzania; Uganda (observers) and Zambia. Zimbabwe was represented by the Zimbabwe Institute.
2. The parties met under the auspices of the umbrella political parties network, the East and Southern African Regional Programme (ESARP), established in 2004. This year the conference resolved to expand its network to include West African countries so as to ensure a more Pan-African partnership known as the African Regional Programme (ARP). The programme facilitates: the exchange of experiences between member parties; country to country exchange visits; and capacity building for political parties. It is founded on the principle of sharing ideas, experiences and information between and among African political parties in a spirit of partnership. It is ultimately aimed at strengthening multiparty democracy through political parties.
3. The theme of the conference was ‘Deepening Voice and Accountability in African Democracy’. It was based on the recognition that the needs and aspirations of African citizens should be the driving force of democratic governance on the continent. Political parties were identified as important vehicles for ensuring that these voices are translated into programmes and policies and holding governments to account.

The parties recognised:

4. Commendable progress has been made in the growth of multi-party democracy on the continent over the last two decades. However, important challenges still remain within the state, political parties and their relations with citizens. These need to be addressed in order to improve conditions for long term stability, justice and people-driven socio-economic development.
5. The need to enhance the ability of all citizens, with special emphasis on marginalised groups in society, to express their views, influence policies and direct the way in which they are governed. Democratic governance also entails that citizens are able to hold to account those that govern on their behalf. Political parties should provide mechanisms and procedures to ensure the active participation of women and youth in governance and decision-making processes both within the state and the party.
6. That political parties play a pivotal role in aggregating the voices of citizens and advancing interests through government. In order to effectively do so, political parties need to lead by example and ensure that they are themselves democratic institutions that allow for inclusiveness and the space for open debate and discussion. It is important that they are answerable to their members and the public at large.
7. The importance of democratic reforms and the strengthening of key democratic institutions in order to create an enabling environment for voice and accountability. It is noteworthy that in most of the participating countries constitutional reform processes are underway. Since both the citizens and the state are subject to the constitution, it is imperative that party members and citizens are actively engaged in their development.
8. That governments and parties on the continent should remain primarily accountable to their own domestic constituencies rather than to external donors.

The conference therefore resolved to:

9. Strengthen political parties as a primary means of increasing the voice of citizens and holding the state to account. Political parties therefore need to embed civic education into their own party education programmes as a means of raising demands for voice and empowering citizens to engage and hold government to account. Political parties also committed themselves to an internal review of their structures and processes in order to ensure that the views, interests and policy preferences of citizens are taken into account. Regular internal elections, discussions on policy issues with members and citizens and addressing the undue influence of money in politics, are important interventions in this respect.
10. Explore avenues for opposition and ruling parties to jointly engage with all sectors of society - including government, the business community and civil society - in developing a shared national democratic consolidation agenda. The Centres for Multi-Party Democracy, set-up by the political parties in most participating countries, are imminently placed to facilitate such a process. The *Democratic Consolidation Strategy Paper* developed by the political parties in Ghana between 2006-2008 may serve as an example.
11. Call upon the donor community to support the strengthening of political parties and national democratic reform agendas in order to enhance democratic governance. Call upon the respective states to support political parties through public funding, because they play a public role, as a means of enhancing democratic participation. Call upon both national and international agencies to specifically target civic and political education programmes that will enable citizens to play an informed and pro-active role in their own governance.
12. Recognise the importance of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance as an instrument for advancing voice and accountability. The parties therefore undertake to encourage the popularisation of this charter, its signing and ratification by their respective countries.
13. Influence the budget-making process as well as to monitor its implementation to ensure that it is done in the public interest. Parties also agreed to strengthen their capacity in this area and cooperate with actors in the 'accountability chain' (such as the auditor general, the media, parliamentary oversight committees and civil society organisations). Parties undertook to lobby for the adoption of a Freedom of Information Act, parliamentary budget offices and civic education on the parliamentary budget process. They called for budgeting processes to be premised on a realistic link between available resources and planned expenditure. They stressed the necessity for political parties to play a role in budgetary processes over funds that are decentralized.
14. Call on parties to proactively engage in reviewing and improving constitutions of their countries to deepen democracy by building more inclusive, accountable, participatory, devolved and open democracies in Africa.
15. Parties resolved to share and discuss the communiqué with their National Executive Committees and their rank and file members.
16. The next conference will be held in Zambia.

09-06-2009

Accepted and Endorsed by the undersigned

Burundi (observers)

Ghana;

Kenya;

Malawi;

Mali;

Mozambique;

South Africa;

Tanzania;

Uganda (observers)

Zambia

Zimbabwe Institute