



SETTING BENCHMARKS FOR ENHANCED POLITICAL PARTY PERFORMANCE FOR DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA



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– CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS REPORT –

EISA's 5th ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM
PROTEA HOTEL WANDERERS, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA
23-24 November 2010



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EISA SYMPOSIUM

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23-24 NOVEMBER 2010

*This report, prepared by Maxine Norah Reitzes, Josefine Kuehnel Larsen and Ebrahim Fakir,
is independent of specific national or political interests.*

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EISA is a non-partisan organisation which seeks to promote democratic principles, free and fair elections, a strong civil society and good governance at all levels of society in Africa.

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ABBREVIATIONS

EISA	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa
EMB	Election management body
IDP	Internally displaced person
KANU	Kenya African National Union
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party – Kenya
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MP	Member of parliament
NARC	National Rainbow Coalition – Kenya
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NIMD	Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy
ODM	Orange Democratic Movement – Kenya
PNU	Party of National Unity – Kenya
POSA	Public Order and Security Act
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People’s Union

INTRODUCTION

EISA's fifth annual symposium was held on 23–24 November 2010 at the Protea Hotel, Johannesburg, South Africa. The theme was 'Setting Benchmarks for Enhanced Political Party Performance for Democratic Governance in Africa'.

The inaugural EISA symposium, held in November 2006, focused on the challenges of conflict, democracy and development in Africa. The second symposium, held in October 2007, examined the prospects for sustainable democratic governance in Africa against a backdrop of endemic poverty and socio-economic inequality. The third symposium took place in October 2008 and discussed the challenges of civil society engagement with the African Peer Review Mechanism, while the fourth symposium, held in November 2009, focused on the problem of persistent violent election-related conflicts in Africa with a view to understanding the causes, magnitude and consequences for democratic governance.

The fifth symposium aimed to develop benchmarks to support political parties in young and developing democracies, not simply by providing a normative wish list but by developing relevant, appropriate and pragmatic benchmarks to promote the long-term institutional development of democratic political systems, as well as the organisational development of political parties on the continent.

CONCEPTUAL AND PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

The main premise for the fifth symposium was the acknowledgement that political parties are the cornerstones of representative democracy. Political parties and party systems are necessary for functioning democratic governance systems, and appropriately designed political systems that are free, open and rights-based help to enhance effective democratic governance.

Political parties are one of the primary institutional vehicles for political representation, interest aggregation and interest articulation. They are also constituent entities in the formation and organisation of governments, as well as channels for maintaining oversight and demanding accountability from governments and those who hold formal power in society.

A democracy based on political parties and party systems as a specific type of government in Africa has been largely externally imposed rather than developing organically from within societies. Consequently, many political parties have been constructed along superficially imposed lines, without the necessary content and substance to give effect to their organisational form. The contemporary challenge, therefore, is for political parties to develop both in form and content, based on universal principles and according to the specific historical, geographic and demographic circumstances characteristic of each society.

In terms of parties' organisational functions, these include recruiting leaders, presenting election candidates and developing competing policy proposals that provide voice and choice. Political parties require as much nurturing and attention as other social and political institutions, including parliaments, government departments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or

election management bodies (EMBs), which receive both scholarly attention as well as technical assistance and development aid.

The performance of political parties affects both party systems and the strength and effectiveness of political institutions. As for relations between and among political parties, there is a growing trend towards dominant party systems in Africa, which tends to reinforce the dominance of ruling parties while accentuating the enfeeblement of already fragmented opposition parties. Consequently, tensions – and on occasion open conflict – between ruling and opposition parties characterises inter-party relations in most African countries. This, of course, negatively affects the functioning of representative institutions such as parliament and local councils.

Based on the principle that democracy depends on, among other things, well-functioning political parties, one way in which the challenges facing parties can be addressed is through the collective development of agreed upon benchmarks for enhanced political performance for democratic governance in Africa. The formulation of benchmarks is intended to serve as a guide to political parties both in and outside of government for effectively structuring political systems in an open, transparent, accessible, competitive and stable way. The benchmarks also serve to provide indicators to political parties regarding the inculcation of sound values and organisational forms in order to improve the functioning of parties.

Benchmarks in this context are a set of indicators, norms and principles which reflect practices and behaviours that citizens can expect of their political parties, regardless of the parties' ideology, geographic location or size.

Ultimately, what emerged from the symposium was a set of benchmarks divided into four main categories: the political system; political parties; institutionalisation and organisational focus; and further suggested benchmarks. Additional benchmarks were developed under each of these categories.

EISA adopted two separate but complementary approaches in the process of formulating benchmarks: an expert reference group comprising party representatives, academics and other stakeholders was established as an advisory body in guiding the development of the benchmarks. Second, in-country workshops and dialogues with political parties were convened in Mozambique, Chad, Lesotho, South Africa and Botswana to draft benchmarks. All these activities culminated in the fifth EISA annual symposium, which brought together political party representatives from a number of African countries. The symposium provided a forum to deliberate on the proposed benchmarks as well as to discuss party systems, the internal organisation of political parties, and the internal and external constraints faced by political parties.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

SESSION 1

WELCOME, OFFICIAL OPENING AND KEYNOTE ADDRESS

The fifth annual EISA symposium began with opening remarks by EISA Board of Directors chairperson **Leshele Thoahlane**, who welcomed participants and noted EISA's work on elections and related processes in Africa.

His Excellency Flt Lt Jerry Rawlings, former president of the Republic of Ghana, delivered the keynote address and officially opened the symposium.

Rawlings acknowledged EISA's work as a leading organisation on the African continent in the areas of elections, democracy and governance. He noted that the symposium was a profound initiative focused on enhancing the efficiency, accountability, responsiveness, transparency and internal democracy of political parties in Africa. Rawlings stressed that democracy must be an indigenous product developed by Africans for Africans, and that political parties must be agents for the contestation of power in a democratic setting by providing alternative policy options and promoting representative democracy.

Rawlings contended that political parties in Africa face many internal and external challenges that jeopardise their ability to function optimally. These, in particular, included a lack of internal democracy, lack of leadership skills, poor administrative and policy-making skills, poor financial management skills, lack of clearly defined goals and poor ideological differentiation, lack of gender equality, and lack of conflict management skills and tolerance both within and between political parties. In addition, a central challenge identified by Rawlings is 'the misplaced perception that one enters politics to get rich'. Corruption, especially among party leaders, human rights violations and the manipulation of ethnicity for political gain are some of the ills bedevilling political systems on the African continent.

Rawlings also stated that, from his perspective, a predominant perception among political actors in Africa is that the government serves as a power base, which can impose its will on political parties and the people and can be used for specific personal gain. This trend demands a change of mindset to ensure that those in political office serve the people rather than lord over them. The above-mentioned challenges have resulted in a lack of trust and declining political party membership.

Rawlings suggested that measures need to be put in place to ensure that governments serve the people and that parties empower the people, as opposed to merely serving as vehicles for political office-holders seeking personal gain and power.

Post-colonialism continues to characterise and influence continental politics, and colonial languages used in political forums disempower and limit participation. Those in power must be of service to and must empower and represent the 'people'.

In constructing themselves as 'ruling', parties invoke the idea of citizens as subjects of the government rather than citizens who are inherently imbued with rights, entitlements and responsibilities. Encouraging and ensuring the participation of women in politics, for instance, is essential for the promotion of democracy, as is the training and skills development of party agents, and voter and civic education.

Rawlings then posed a series of questions that should be asked, including: What is the ideal type of leadership required to steer a political party in a democratic direction? What are the necessary mechanisms required to institutionalise the smooth and democratic internal functioning of parties? What has to be done to ensure adequate financial resources for parties?

Rawlings encouraged both ruling and opposition parties to use the symposium to find solutions to the common challenges they face through the formulation and adoption of benchmarks. These benchmarks should then be reflected in the design of political systems and in the behaviour, operations and overall performance of political leaders and political parties.

SESSION 2

POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRACY: THEORY AND PRACTICE

2.1 IS DEMOCRACY WITHOUT POLITICAL PARTIES POSSIBLE? CAN POLITICAL PARTIES EXIST IN THE ABSENCE OF DEMOCRACY?

2.1.1 Mosibudi Mangena, a former South African Cabinet minister, outlined the centrality of political parties in the democratic governance system. He defined the conceptual framework, contours and limits of three key terms – democracy, governance and democratic governance – and located the role and function of political parties within this framework.

Democracy is a political form of government where the power to govern is derived from the people. Democracy has been termed the last form of government because it is believed to be the best ruling format, characterised by credible and fair competitive elections, freedom of expression, speech and association, as well as effective representation and responsiveness to citizens.

Political parties are essential in the democratic context as they provide a plurality of diverse voices and present alternative choices for voters. Citizens can weigh options when electing their representatives from different political parties and candidates. For political parties to succeed in offering a plurality of choices, they must be effective articulators of their policy message. Choice is not the only factor for the institutional and organisational development of parties. Parties' ability to be an effective 'voice' is as important as their ability to provide an alternative 'choice'. Representation of constituent and member views, as well as performance in representative institutions and public discourse about policy choices and governance trajectories, are key components of parties' ability to provide voice. To effectively offer choice, parties require organisational coherence and effectiveness, as well as the development and articulation of coherent and well-developed policies and decision-making processes.

Contemporary African politics is characterised by the colonial construct of political systems, both in terms of one partyism and the idea of 'ruling' parties rather than 'governing' parties. The construct of ruling party as opposed to governing party, however, has implications for the way in which the ruling party in government structures its relationship with the governed. In constructing itself as 'ruling', the party invokes the idea of the citizen as a subject of government rather than a citizen that has rights, entitlements and responsibilities. This trend is inherent in the use of colonial languages in parliaments, which enforces a disconnect between parties and the masses, most of whom cannot understand the parliamentary proceedings.

Western political cultures and rituals are also alien to the masses. One consequence is that the ruling elite is able to patronise potential supporters who do not understand what is happening politically, the majority of whom are also poor, with free t-shirts or food packages. Such resources can be used to manipulate potential voters.

The issue of language also raises the question of accountability: How do the masses participate in decision-making if they do not understand what is going on? It was suggested that, when

possible, political parties make information available in local languages. It was also suggested that democracy must suit African conditions. The masses must be able to participate: language, structures and processes must be understood. Political parties must tweak democracy to be more inclusive. Currently, the intelligentsia think they own the state and the masses.

Mangena posited that there might be a conflict between different understandings and expectations of democracy in Africa. This suggests that it is not merely the languages and rituals of democracy that need to be addressed but the very normative, systemic and procedural essence of the understandings thereof; and on the basis of those understandings, the very construction of 'democracy' in contemporary Africa.

Democratic governance is the capacity of a society to define and establish policies, and to resolve conflict peacefully within the existing local order. Democratic institutions are based on the principles of accountability, freedom, participation in decision-making, and the inclusion of the most vulnerable sectors in society. It is the responsibility of political parties to involve and include citizens in the political processes.

Poverty is a challenge to democracy and benefits the ruling party, which often promises constituencies relief in this regard. Thus, democracy works for those who are educated in the colonial sense.

A common theme during many of the symposium sessions regarding the setting of benchmarks for enhanced political party performance for democratic governance in Africa was to bear in mind context-specific conditions, both on the continent as a whole and in particular countries. In this respect, presenters and delegates mentioned levels of development and modernity, language, indigenous political culture and historical traditions, and levels of literacy and education.

EISA's concept note, which framed the symposium, stated that '[t]he contemporary challenge, therefore, is for political parties to develop both in form and content, based on universal principles, according to the specific historical, geographic and demographic circumstances characteristic of each society'. This suggests that best *principles*, as opposed to best *practice*, must be selected from democratic systems and that these must be tailored for specific country contexts.

Professor Gyimah-Boadi of the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development suggested that, based on perceptions of the failures of democracy as reported in Afrobarometer surveys, it may not be possible to remodel democracy to be African. He argued that there is a contradiction when connecting local cultures and the power of chiefs and traditional leaders with elected leaders. African democracy needs to include these local structures and cultures. These issues were raised by Pearl Sithole in her presentation, discussed later in the report. Mpho Molomo also addressed these issues at length, noting that African political parties were formed in the image of Western political parties, neglecting African realities of cultural plurality and varying identities.

Some presenters, such as Lodge, cited differing socio-economic and political criteria as qualifications regarding the possible and reasonable benchmarks one could expect from African countries. There was, however, no consensus around this point. A former South African Member

of Parliament (MP) and member of the Task Team rejected out of hand the accommodation of context specifics. Others were equally firm in their position that democratic benchmarks are universal. While no-one wants to compromise on the necessary conditions for democracy, there are shades of grey when considering the sufficient conditions. Furthermore, while everyone wishes to be idealistic, historical, socio-economic and cultural empirical conditions do vary from country to country. This phenomenon is not confined to Africa.

Some of the benchmarks which were formulated rely on, for example, financial, infrastructural and human resources, which simply do not exist in some countries. Reasons for this include civil wars, mass emigration, the impositions made by Bretton Woods institutions, and even natural disasters and factors such as famine and drought.

2.1.2 Professor Mwesiga Baregu of St. Augustine's Catholic University, Tanzania, considered the nature, role and functioning of political parties within the discourse of democracy, and emphasised their centrality to political stability, building a democratic political culture and initiating democratic government.

The election law in Tanzania states that presidential results cannot be contested in a court of law. Nonetheless, during the 2007 elections this law was flouted by several parties, which did not recognise the elected president. This was evinced when MPs walked out of parliament during the presidential inauguration. The armed forces play a major role in Tanzania, and the head of the armed forces had to step in to announce that everyone accept the election results.

Baregu said it is essential to build a politically competent society that is able to question the inherent inequalities in the political system and prevent the poverty, ignorance and insecurities that fuel conflict. He argued that not being able to contest the presidency is a recipe for violence. Contestation need not be violent and can take the form of mass action and peaceful protest.

Baregu identified both positive and negative characteristics of political parties in a democracy. For him, the advantages of democracy and political parties are the:

- promotion of a popular selection and control of those who rule through politically competent citizenry, and the ability to question those who rule; and
- delivery of public goods and the combating of poverty, ignorance and insecurity. Unfortunately, the latter have become sources of political capital insofar as they are exploited for party gain.

The negative roles of political parties are that:

- the party as an organisation has a vested interest in reproducing itself;
- they represent the will and interests of a small clique and party oligarchy;
- they are exclusionary insofar as parties have an ethnic base rather than a national character, and/or they only acquire a national character through an ethnic base;
- they lack clear ideological goals;
- there is conflict between political parties representing similar ideas; and
- political candidates 'party hop' to attain political office.

Financing is also a problem. Parties beg for money at rallies, and citizens must decide whether to go to the rallies of parties that ask for money or those that give them things. Another problem with funding is that of donor-funded elections: if parties have to beg to be put in power, what are the implications for those who achieve power through donor funding? Elections, Baregu argued, should be 'donor free'. Funding can be raised, for example, through taxes. If citizens pay for elections it is easier for them to hold their representatives to account, and harder for ruling parties to resist being moved out of power.

While Tanzania has embraced multiparty democracy, the proliferation of political parties has not resulted in the increased capacity of parties to carry out their mandate, more alternative choices and opinions, or operational coherence. Rather, it has led to a congealing of parties that lack distinctive policy messages or ideological identity. For example, during the election campaign it was hard to distinguish parties in terms of their ideologies, and there was lack of clear political goals and interests. The various political parties essentially had similar messages and outlooks, and instead focused on the personalities of the party leadership. According to Baregu, this raises the question of whether political parties are necessary if personalities are the deciding factor in political competition.

Baregu called for enhanced administrative systems, improved conflict mediation and management skills, increased public outreach and constituency relations skills, as well as sound financial management, accounting and record keeping. This would enhance opposition parties' ability to challenge the ruling party.

Democracy within parties (intra-party democracy) and the effective representation of certain sectors and social constituencies, especially women, minorities and the youth, remain an acute challenge. A residual cause for concern within parties is the problem of sufficient capacity to ensure internal administrative and executive organisational functionality, with weak administrative processes and insufficiently developed procedural protocols for decision-making, policy articulation and intra-party communication. Another characteristic of political parties is the lack of liaison between different structures, branches and organs.

2.2 TRENDS IN TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN POLITICAL PARTIES ACROSS THE CONTINENT: AFROBAROMETER SURVEY

Professor E. Gyimah-Boadi of the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development explored the levels of trust and confidence that citizens have in democracy and political parties using results from the Afrobarometer surveys. He said that an average of 70% of 'ordinary Africans' express their preference for democracy over authoritarian systems of government in Africa. A 2008 study conducted in 12 countries found that 79% of the public reject one-man rule, 75% reject military rule and 72% reject one-party rule. However, the rejection of non-democratic alternatives of government was stronger than support for democracy.

Only a minority are satisfied with the levels of democracy in their own country. The popular rating of a country as democratic was on average 57%, ranging from 28% to 90%, and the level of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy was generally low at an average of 49%, with a popular patience with democracy at 50%. People's patience with democracy seems to be wearing thin. There is therefore reason to worry about the prospect of solidifying democracy in Africa.

There is strong support for multiparty democracy in Africa, with popular support for multiparty politics having risen from 55% in 2002 to 69% in 2008. Levels of support do, however, differ between countries. In 2008, 47% of respondents believed that multiparty politics may generate conflict. This perception shows a decline from 55% in 2002.

The majority of respondents believed that the role of the opposition is to support government.

Trust in governance institutions, and in political parties in particular, is lacking. Declining trust in political parties, especially ruling or governing parties, is not as high as trust in other governance institutions, such as the police, the president and the national assembly, and this has direct implications for the credibility of the governance system. Trust in ruling parties is stagnating, while trust in opposition parties is increasing. This trend has increased from 22% in Round 2 of the Afrobarometer survey to 36% in Round 4.

Gyimah-Boadi cited the following factors which may be driving these opinions:

- Respondents with formal education are more likely to support multiparty democracy.
- More women than men support multiparty democracy.
- More Muslims support multiparty democracy.
- Trust in the ruling party: there is a perception that the ruling party / government is performing economic and social functions well.
- Support for the opposition increases when the government is perceived as not performing well.

On average, 46% of citizens were satisfied with their country's management of the economy. Nonetheless, only 22% stated that the income gap had narrowed and only 27% were satisfied with job creation. There was only a 21% satisfaction rate with the stabilisation of commodity prices. Governments generally did better when it came to social service delivery, with a 50% satisfaction rate for fighting crime, 42% for fighting corruption, 60% for improvements in basic health services, 70% for combating HIV / AIDS and 65% for addressing educational needs.

The issue of poverty and other social ills being used as capital by the ruling party to manipulate voters was raised again. Delegates from the floor stressed the enormous challenge that poverty poses in Africa, arguing that it distorts the role of political parties. Some claimed that poverty is a boon to ruling parties, benefiting them by providing an issue for manipulation. Others argued that poverty cannot be allowed to undermine democracy, citing the example of India, which is a successful democracy despite poverty, and which uses democratic politics to address an anti-poverty policy.

This raised a debate about sequencing: Should democracy precede development or should development precede democracy? One delegate contended that the perception that development should precede democracy can be contested given that in a country like South Africa, with relatively high levels of development, democracy was something worth struggling for. The delegate also stated that in some North African and Middle Eastern countries where there is development, citizens have been taking to the streets to demand greater democracy. This delegate also suggested that democracy is a virtue and a good in itself.

Another delegate observed that electorates are younger and more 'hot-blooded', arguing that rigged elections are a recipe for violence as they will not be tolerated by the younger generation. 'The right to vote goes with the right to be voted for', and those who vote will not tolerate the undermining of those who win a democratic election.

What is democracy and what are its problems and limits in Africa? This appeared to be the central conceptual issue that the symposium delegates raised as requiring further conceptual, theoretical and empirical work. While the symposium was not the appropriate place to answer the question, academics and political parties were urged to consider the question further as it was key to the future success of democracy on the continent. A further question arising out of the discussion was: Are Africans' conceptions of democratic governance caught in a conflict between ideas of tradition and ideas of modernity?

SESSION 3

INTERNAL ISSUES AND POLITICAL PARTIES

3.1 ALTERNATION AND LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION IN AFRICAN DEMOCRACIES

Professor Tom Lodge of the University of Limerick, Ireland, and EISA board member focused on the conditions and settings that facilitate an orderly turnover of parties and leaders.

Orderly turnover of executive office between political parties in elections after the foundation election is widely identified as a benchmark for the entrenchment of procedural democracy. An additional related measure of the extent to which democratic conventions have become generally accepted routines is the extent to which presidential incumbents comply with, or resist, term limits imposed on the holding of presidential office.

Protracted periods of one-party dominance in elections may not signal a lack of democracy. Political systems that feature oscillations in office of small shallowly rooted groups of competing elites are not necessarily evidence of democratic entrenchment. Fourteen out of 44 sub-Saharan African countries have held post-foundation elections, featuring the orderly succession of presidents with different party affiliations and the alternation of parties in government.

The depth and quality of party organisation can both facilitate and inhibit turnover. However, internal functioning of parties in terms of following constitutions, rules and regulations, programmes, manifestos, codes of conduct and ethics is lacking and needs further development to ensure transition between leaders. Leadership succession has been largely inhibited in countries with strong party organisations, such as Zimbabwe, Zambia and Kenya. Patron or cadre-style parties, as opposed to mass parties, might favour routine turnovers.

Factors that reduce the likelihood of zero-sum politics include social equality, industrialisation, economic diversification, significant modern private sectors and literacy. A well-organised civil society featuring, for instance, large-scale independent working class mobilisation, including trade unions, can challenge parties and leaders that cling to power and thus encourage political transition. Historically, however, this has not been a feature of modern politics in most African states, although organised labour did play an important role in Ghanaian de-colonisation before the trade union movement was incorporated into the ruling party. Elsewhere, organised labour played a significant role in challenging single or dominant party rule, for example, in Zambia and Zimbabwe.

A country's Human Development Index ranking and economic growth levels (gross domestic product) do possibly contribute to the routinisation of alternation and succession. Countries with strong democracies tend to perform well with respect to development indicators compared to the worst cases for alternation or succession. The latter countries have higher levels of poverty and inequality.

Liberal democratic discourse also plays a role in facilitating alternation. This is particularly evident in Ghana and Senegal. Both countries have well established Creole elites that have

predominated in a genteel 'constitutionalist' politics since the mid-19th century. Ghana's 2000 election featured explicit reference to this tradition with the participation of a resurrected Fanti Confederation.

Market reform has also played a significant role in political party alternation and leadership succession. In certain cases, such as Ghana, Niger, Senegal and Benin, market reform preceded the introduction of competitive politics by a decade. Decentralisation may have also played a role in reducing political stakes at the centre to make alternation less risky. Ghana and Benin featured local government-led democratisation, as did Mali. This region generally has created vigorous organs of participatory local government. Ghana is an exceptional case in Africa for its long history of elected local government.

3.2 CASE STUDY ON RULING PARTIES AND THE USE OF STATE RESOURCES

3.2.1 Ruling parties, incumbency and use of state resources. When does abuse of state resources make elections unfair?

Dr Lucien Toulou, EISA Chad, addressed challenges resulting from party incumbency, such as internal party democracy and the use and abuse of state resources. This is another issue that was raised throughout the symposium, first by Mangena, who noted that a peculiarity of the under-developed African state is that the state is the dominant resource and it is generally unavailable to those who are not part of the political elite. Parties that get into power therefore find it difficult to leave as they have captured state resources and are reluctant to part with them.

Toulou argued that the existence of a reasonably level playing field between incumbents and the opposition is a defining attribute of fair elections. All parties and candidates should have an adequate chance of winning voter support. The playing field is considered uneven when state institutions are widely abused for partisan ends, incumbents are systematically favoured at the expense of the opposition, and the opposition's ability to organise and compete in elections is seriously handicapped.

Incumbent parties and candidates, and those already in office and up for re-election, enjoy various degrees of routine electoral advantage and privilege. What sets democratic regimes apart is when the competitive advantage of incumbent office holders does not seriously hinder the opposition's capacity to challenge them. Abuse begins when the use of state institutions and resources is so excessive and one-sided that it limits political competition and restricts the possibility of a reasonably level playing field. The fact that ruling parties have certain advantages which the opposition are unable to match makes it impossible, or at least very difficult, to unseat incumbent office-holders. This successful re-election of incumbents is not simply explained by electoral performance but also by the extensive abuse of state resources. Abuse of incumbency results in allegations of vote rigging as opposition parties claim they are not competing against a party in elections but against the state.

Incumbency in itself is not a problem. Re-election could even mean that voters are satisfied with the incumbent's performance. Parties in power may enjoy the advantages of incumbency, but the rules and conduct of the election contest ought to be fair. It is when the rules of the game tend to

favour the incumbent and disadvantage the challenger that the incumbency position is abused. Consequently, advantages of incumbency become a problem when they give an unreasonable advantage to a party or a candidate to the detriment of another, when they distort the playing field, and when they make it excessively difficult for challengers to contest elections due to an unequal chance of winning.

On-going incumbency is prevalent in Africa because, first, the party system emerged from fledgling multipartyism consisting mostly of relatively stable and dominant parties surrounded by small and unstable parties. Second, dominant parties are peculiar because unlike other party systems they tend to outspend competitors, rendering otherwise open competition so unfair that they virtually win elections before election day.

The abuse of state resources through incumbency includes campaign financing, partisan electoral redistricting, discriminatory media visibility and disparity in available funding. Owing to the dominant party system, incumbents may also deploy the machinery of the state (for example, state buildings, vehicles, and communications infrastructure) for electoral campaigns. Public employees and security forces may be mobilised *en masse* on behalf of the governing party. Political competition that allows resource monopolies to sustain political monopolies, resulting in rampant resource asymmetries between ruling parties and the opposition must be addressed. Checks and balances within the political system can prevent the use of political offices by incumbent elites as sources of private wealth accumulation. There is a strong contention that dominant parties persist or fail based primarily on their ability to politicise public resources.

This does not mean that ruling parties can never lose elections in Africa or that access to resources is the single key factor for winning elections. However, lack of popularity and poor performances by incumbents are not sufficient grounds for the opposition to win elections. Ruling parties do lose elections when voter disillusionment and the unpopularity of incumbents combine with fair elections. But a level playing field must be guaranteed for fair elections to be conducted. A fair electoral process should result in either a pro- or anti-incumbency verdict. It needs incumbent power holders to surrender power to winning parties and candidates after a regular and fair process. It is through the same process that the incumbent can return to power, provided that all parties and candidates are treated equally.

3.2.2 Mozambique case study

Zefanias Matsimbe, EISA Mozambique, argued that the illegal use of state resources produces biased competition between election contestants. Political corruption – the abuse of political process and power for private gain – discredits elections, poisons government, undermines transparency and accountability, and frustrates the consolidation of the rule of law. Matsimbe examined the legal framework for the use of state resources by political parties in Mozambique and its ability to level the playing field between the political competitors.

Two legal instruments in Mozambique guide access to state resources and other resources for political use, namely the Law on Political Parties (Law 7/91) and the Electoral Law (Law 7/2007). The Constitution also recognises that political parties play an important role in aggregating different interests of the people and promoting peace and stability. All parties therefore deserve

free access to specific state resources to fulfil their roles, including the public media, which is used to voice party ideologies and canvass for votes. The National Electoral Commission in Mozambique regulates the utilisation of these public goods.

Political parties in Mozambique are prohibited from being funded directly by state companies. Parties represented in parliament are given national funding based on the number of seats held. Parties receiving state funds are required to account for it using public administration procedures; however, there are no legal disclosure requirements on parties' expenditure and no expenditure restrictions.

During electoral campaigning, political parties, coalitions and candidates are strictly prohibited from using the assets of the state, municipalities, autonomous institutions, state companies, public enterprises, and companies or partnerships with exclusive public shareholding or majority public ownership. However, legal regimes governing campaign financing (and other state resources) are riddled with loopholes and are poorly enforced.

Matsimbe explained that political parties are permitted to receive funds from different sources, with the exception of foreign governments, NGOs or national public companies. There are no legal disclosure requirements on parties' income and expenditure. The existing disclosure of spending requirements are too vague to be properly enforced and are limited only to funding provided by the state. The law is silent on the use of public servants for political purposes. Parties also have no expenditure limits for electoral campaigns, and they are not obliged to declare the sources and amounts of the donations they receive. Since 1994 no punishment has been reported for the illegal use of public resources.

There is no clear distinction between the state and the ruling party in Mozambique, which commonly results in the improper and illegal use of state resources by the incumbent party. This is a consequence of vague legislation and poor enforcement. These loopholes and the lack of government transparency and accountability damage electoral processes, fair competition, and democracy itself. There is little control over political corruption in Mozambique.

Another problem arising from the lack of separation between the state and the ruling party in Mozambique is that it is unclear when the president is behaving as the president or the head of the party, or when the party is behaving as the government or as the party.

Electoral reform initiatives currently taking place should be used as an opportunity to tackle the illegal use of state resources in Mozambique. This is the time for watchdog organisations, opposition political parties and the government to work together to strengthen electoral rules governing the use of state resources and to ensure transparency and accountability in their use. All parties should have reasonable and proportionate access to state resources, and regulatory frameworks that are enforceable must be designed.

3.3 LEADERSHIP, POLITICS, POLICY AND IDEOLOGY

Professor Mpho Molomo of the University of Botswana observed that political parties are the basic prerequisite for deepening and consolidating democracy, echoing the introductory remarks made by Mangena.

Political parties in Africa emerged as a response to illegitimate and undemocratic colonial rule. They were formed to spearhead national struggles against colonialism and to pursue nation building in the immediate aftermath of anti-colonial struggles. During the Cold War some of these organisations and parties mutated into regressive nationalist parties rather than adopting a progressive, inclusive nationalistic approach. These political parties were styled in the image of Western political parties, neglecting African realities of cultural plurality and varying identities. One-party states were dominant in order to suppress the proliferation of political parties along ethnic lines. This despite the fact that ethnicity was a main contributor to primary African identities, which created a sense of belonging. In the current political environment the positive aspects of primordial loyalties need to be recognised as an important organising principle for party formation, instead of it being automatically rejected as an undesirable type of party organisation.

It is essential that leaders enhance the credibility of political parties and occupy a high moral ground. Leaders are role models and must set examples that inspire trust. They should consult codes of conduct in terms of disclosure and ethics, which spell out how a leader should behave. Political parties should also have a clear ideology, with collective action for the maintenance, alteration or transformation of society – a set of ideas, principles and doctrines on how to organise society. This party ideology should not simply recycle Western theoretical frameworks but should draw upon African perspectives so that parties are relevant to African social formations.

SESSION 4

POLITICAL PARTIES, POWER AND PROCESSES

4.1 PARTY SYSTEMS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON POLITICAL PARTIES

Kabasu Babu Katulondi, EISA Chad, drawing on experiences from Central Africa, specifically Chad, argued that the impact of political parties upon the sustainability of democracy in Africa has been largely neglected. He noted that political parties are over-idealised as indispensable agents of democracy. In response to Lodge's and Baregu's observations, Katulondi maintained that 'the existence of several political parties – as they mushroom in Central African states – is often depicted as the vibrancy of democracy and a vital factor for political competition'. Katulondi continued to argue that 'without refuting the valued role of these political organisations, one of the reasons why democracy does not seem to blossom in these countries is inherent to the legacy of neopatrimonialism'. Regressive multipartyism has hindered the sustainability of democracy in this region. One would assume that the existence of several political parties would contribute to the vibrancy of democracy and be a vital factor in political competition; however, neopatrimonialism produces a counterproductive multipartyism, causing dysfunctions in political parties and resulting in their isolation from society. The result is a 'traffic jam' in the political arena of Central African countries.

In his paper, Lodge does offer the qualification that: 'Protracted periods of one-party dominance in elections may not signal democratic degeneration. Political systems that feature oscillations in office of small shallowly rooted groups of competing elites is not necessarily evidence of democratic entrenchment.'

Katulondi believed that key patterns of neopatrimonialism in the realm of political parties include the tendency of party presidents to privatise political parties, the culture and practice of the political patriarch, and clientelism. These patterns and their underlying logic have perverted the foundational basis of political parties in such multiparty countries as Congo Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Cameroon and Chad. The evidence of neopatrimonialism in party politics in most of these countries makes it plausible to allude to neomonopartyism. This notion epitomises the reality in which multiple parties behave like micro-dictatorships. According to Katulondi, many parties are created with selfish political motivations, which are rationalised as advancing society. These types of parties are not founded in order to formulate alternative policies that can transform societies, but rather work to maintain the status quo of the ruling oligarchy or to replace the 'big man' and gain access to privileges. Such self-advancing party politics strangle democracy and do not result in change in society.

African democratisation processes occur in a context where the political culture and practices of dictatorial and totalitarian systems prevail. Political parties are reduced to mere electoral instruments and tools of political mobilisation, devoid of any capacity to impact upon the policy process and to contribute towards societal transformation. There is a need for political parties to embark on a process of developmental transformation. Currently, the power held by party presidents hinders the ability of parties to implement their programmes.

The developmental transformation process should aim to move parties away from being mere instruments of electoralism and clientelist mobilisation, and instead to become agents of change in post-conflict countries. The transformation of political parties into developmental forces involves an internal democratisation process that will enable parties to operate in accordance with the needs of citizens, rather than being instruments of elites that resist tangible change.

Katulondi stated that 'the features of patrimonialism have been deeply socialised and internalised in the collective political consciousness', resulting in the failure of multi-party democracy in Africa and in the inability of parties to differentiate themselves from one another.

Katulondi noted that 'from Kinshasa to N'Djamena, the prevailing belief was that democratisation and multipartyism would purge political systems of their regressive practices that hindered socio-economic development'. For reasons discussed above, these hopes were dashed.

4.2 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM AND POLITICAL PARTIES

Reiterating the point made by many previous speakers and delegates from the floor, Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) executive director **Roel von Meijenfeldt** said that democracy cannot be exported, and for it to be sustainable it has to grow from within a country. A one-size-fits-all approach does not work for democracy and political parties; but we can talk about best practice if we wish to improve our institutions.

Von Meijenfeldt noted that multiparty democracy has mainly been associated with elections and competition for power. In several African countries, successive elections have resulted in a broadened political space and a deepening of democracy. Electoral systems and the election rules which translate the votes cast in general elections into seats won by parties and candidates have the most important impact on the development and performance of political parties. Besides contesting elections, political parties have the mandate to formulate public policies and mobilise public opinion. The position of political parties, and hence their opportunity to develop and perform, is best assured when grounded in constitutions, the enforcement of which can be challenged in an independent constitutional court. In newly developing democracies there is a need to review the constitution and the social contract between states and their citizens in order to enhance democracy and the functioning of political parties and government.

Citing the famous definition of democracy by Abraham Lincoln as governance of the people, by the people, for the people, Von Meijenfeldt noted that political parties have been described as the conveyor belts between people and their governments. Political parties ought to aggregate people's interests into policies, select candidates to stand for election, compete in elections, form a government or be in opposition, and keep governments accountable. The reality, however, is often far from this idealised picture. Von Meijenfeldt argued that the majority of political parties remain vehicles of the elite, who use them to consolidate their privileged positions. In countries with exclusionary and avaricious political practices, the focus on elections and on competition for power has resulted in a breakdown of states. Such instances include Zimbabwe and the near collapse of Kenya in 2008. It is the responsibility of political systems to limit 'briefcase' or 'taxi' parties – that is, the establishment of a political party as a business opportunity.

Political parties across the continent are registered under different legal regimes. For instance, in Malawi and Tanzania parties are registered under the respective country's political party legislation by an appointed registrar of political parties. In South Africa, parties are registered under the Electoral Commission Act by the Independent Electoral Commission. In Zambia, parties are defined as associations or clubs and are registered under the Societies' Act by the registrar of societies. An independent and professional registration authority is a key agency for political party development.

In most countries it is relatively easy to register a party. This results in an increased number of political parties participating in elections. In many countries the political landscape is characterised by a proliferation of nascent parties, of which a fair number have no prospect of becoming fully-fledged political parties.

Raising yet another important issue that dominated the symposium, Von Meijenfeldt identified a number of conclusions drawn from legal frameworks governing party financing. First, in countries such as Malawi the threshold of 10% of the national vote is quite high. It rules out a number of small parties which fall below this threshold, despite their legitimate representation in parliament. This provision also assumes that a country follows a particular electoral system (proportional representation), and yet Malawi uses the first-past-the-post electoral model. Second, few countries have strict disclosure requirements regarding private funding. Weak regulatory frameworks encourage fraudulent practices and have led to situations such as that in Malawi and Zambia, where parties are dependent for their survival on well-to-do personalities. This results in unstable party systems as parties may disappear with the demise of those who finance them. Third, while proportionality as a basis for public financing recognises the electoral strength of parties in a given country, it may simultaneously result in further entrenchment of the dominant party, thereby not levelling the playing field.

In pointing out that democratic and economic development reinforce each other, Von Meijenfeldt illustrated how information technology has empowered people by reinventing the social contracts between states and citizens. The new liberation instrument is no longer the AK-47 rifle, but the internet and cell phone.

This paper could have probed the socio-political context in which parties exist, focusing on the networks and linkages that they forge. Relations between governing and opposition parties could have also been explored. The presentation would have been enriched by discussing transitional mechanisms for the liberation and/or anti-colonial and armed movements.

4.3 OIL AND WATER? POLITICAL PARTIES AND TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Professor Mpilo Pearl Sithole of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, began by defining systems of governance as political rule over a 'community', regardless of scale. Government in this context refers to the system of governance institutionalised in modernity in relation to various levels and departments of the state. Traditional leadership is sidelined and diffused in the formal political system. Traditional leadership refers to a system of governance based on social affinities defined in some traditional values and norms of a particular community.

Notably, Sithole was the only speaker who touched on the issue of civil society organisation participation in governance. She argued for the co-existence and cooperation of traditional leadership and formal modern government through public participation and a re-examination and redefinition of African democracy, whereby communities define themselves in relation to their own social affinities and values.

At the core of the examination of the relationships between governance and citizens is the question of resource management. Local communities do not have much scope to express their desires and receive action because of limited possibilities to manoeuvre economic assets and entitlements. Public participation becomes a facade to diffuse attention from the failure of the state in dealing with key sensitive questions.

Public participation even at the most local level cannot be divorced from the grand level leadership's capability to exercise political leadership and confront difficult issues of a political and resource management nature relevant to a particular era. Therefore 'public participation' can be used productively to suggest engagement of people, especially at local level, or it can be abused to enable top leaders to shun their responsibility to decide on complex resource rationalisation.

Political parties are at the core of democracy because they are the sole participants in elections and the exercise of majority rule. This is important at national level, but largely excludes the public. By contrast, a traditional leader has direct relationships with people and debates their issues in a case-specific nature. Government reveres democracy in its representative sense but fails to deal with people's real preferences. Public participation is merely symbolic. Traditional leadership reveres the identity of the leader and can be saddled within a non-performing leader if the rest of the system does not function optimally.

Government is appropriate for the large-scale issues, even though it may be inefficient. Even at a macro-level it cannot negotiate equity for people's real interests. Traditional leadership allows for real responsiveness to real people and situations. Nevertheless, it is prone to manipulation if a specific leader abuses the reverence shown to 'traditional appointment'. The major differences between public participation in a Western democratic system and in a traditional system are symbolic rather than real. Public participation with local leaders is socially embedded. Political parties should recognise traditional governance structures, thereby enhancing their impact within the socio-cultural context.

4.4 POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTORAL PROCESSES

Vincent Thobi, EISA DRC country director, examined the linkages between parties and elections, raising the questions: Can political parties exist without electoral processes? Can electoral processes be led without political parties? One of the attributes and main definitions of political parties is that they are civil associations that compete for power through fair and democratic elections. The public perception is that fair elections are the expression of democracy. A country is said to be 'democratic' when it has successfully concluded an election to the satisfaction of all parties, respecting international norms and standards. Although democracy cannot exist without elections, fair and credible elections alone cannot qualify a country as democratic. In the

pursuit of power, attitudes of parties during elections have led to destabilisation (for example in Kenya and Zimbabwe), suppression of freedom (for example in Rwanda and Swaziland), coups d'état (for example in Niger, Guinea and Madagascar) and wars.

Political parties contribute to the vitality of democracy. As much as a one-party system is a danger for democracy, multiparty power-sharing is a guarantee for stability, an assurance of the promotion of human rights and institutional balance, and a watch on the interests of the country and the people. Furthermore, in post-conflict and transitional situations a diversity of parties ensures the inclusion of all groups and interests.

The first democratic elections held in the DRC since the country's independence in August 1960 saw a dramatic increase in the number of political parties. Of the 273 parties formed before July 2006 (date of the first election), 52 gained seats in the National Assembly. A similar number of parties are represented in provincial governments and legislatures. Though this may be seen as a scattered political landscape, it has the benefit of reuniting the country and political leaders. In other country contexts political parties can represent the interests of regions, geographic entities, minority groups and religious groups that are often reflected in the design of policies or in the implementation of development projects. As long as the interests of these specific groups do not block or undermine the unity of the country or claim exclusive rights or more privileges than other groups in the nation, parties represented in elected institutions play a vital role in the construction of the state.

Nonetheless, there is a lack of transparency and a lack of systems for the nomination of candidates, as well as limited knowledge about the technicalities of elections. Though the primary role of a party is to pursue power through elections and thereafter to contribute to and pursue policies that lead to the development of the country, most parties do not have sufficient knowledge of the electoral legislation and framework of the electoral process.

Political parties do not give sufficient attention to training their party agents to play their 'watchdog' role effectively. Often party agents come to polling stations unprepared, with little or no knowledge of the electoral law or voting and counting procedures, take no notes, do not complete reports, and at times interfere in the process or challenge electoral staff because of their ignorance of electoral law. In addition, the individuals who are trained do not share their skills and knowledge with their colleagues.

Much of the conflict on the continent over the past twenty years has been connected to elections. Political parties play an important role in encouraging a credible and transparent electoral process, especially in post-conflict countries, and can help between elections to diffuse institutional conflict. Political parties are necessary for elections, and elections are necessary to ensure that there is fair competition between parties to access power in a democracy.

4.5 PARTY SYSTEMS, COALITIONS AND STABILITY

This section looked at the enfeeblement or fragmentation of opposition parties in Kenya and Zimbabwe, exploring practices in interparty relations and the conditions under which party coalitions are possible. It also examined the relevant principles for sustainable coalition building in the pursuit of political stability.

4.5.1 Kenyan case study

The Kenyan example of party coalition was presented by **Hon. Jeremiah Kioni**, Party of National Unity (PNU) MP and **Hon. Aden Duale**, Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) national vice chairman and MP Dujis constituency. Kenya has had some experience with coalition politics since independence in 1963. A number of coalitions have resulted in outright mergers (such as that between the Kenya African National Union (KANU) and Kenya African Democratic Union in 1964), the formation of party / geographical and ethnic alliances, and the pre-election alliance that led to the formation of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) in 2002, and now the Grand Coalition Government.

NARC was a pre-election coalition formed by the National Alliance of Kenya Party and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to remove the then ruling party, KANU, which had entrenched itself in Kenyan politics since independence. NARC won the 2002 elections; however, shortly after the elections serious divisions emerged that eventually led to the collapse of NARC. The NARC coalition government was characterised by constant leadership wrangles, suspicion and mistrust, the lack of a unifying ideology and policies, competition for positions, and the lack of adequate consultation, structures and institutions for running the coalition.

This caused tension during the 2005 referendum on the then proposed constitution. The LDP led by Raila Odinga teamed up with the former ruling party KANU and others to form the ODM, which campaigned against the draft constitution. President Mwai Kibaki campaigned for the passage of the draft constitution. The defeat of the draft constitution coupled with misunderstandings between the NARC partners on the implementation of the pre-election Memorandum of Understanding led to sharp divisions in the government.

The seeds of discontent planted during the 2005 referendum contributed to the bitter rivalry and hotly contested elections in 2007, which resulted in more than 1,300 deaths and over 600,000 people being displaced from their homes. The Grand Coalition Government was enacted in 2008 following protracted negotiations by the Panel of Eminent African Personalities, chaired by Kofi Annan.

The agreement was reached between President Kibaki's PNU and Prime Minister Odinga's ODM. The coalition was formed as a necessary step to avert the political crisis precipitated by violence after the announcement of the 2007 presidential election results, which both the PNU and ODM claimed to have won.

The National Dialogue and Reconciliation Accord was signed in February 2008, paving the way for the enactment of a legal framework to guide the reconstruction, healing, reconciliation and reform process. The accord had four main agendas, namely: cease fire; rehabilitation of internally displaced persons (IDPs); power sharing and national reforms; and democratic consolidation and constitutional reforms.

The promulgation of a new constitution in August 2010 marked the climax in terms of achievements for the Kenya Grand Coalition Government. The new constitution not only recognises political parties as institutions of public governance, but also acknowledges citizens' political rights within a broad-based bill of rights. The power-sharing formula brought in some

sense of inclusivity and diversity in terms of geographical and ethnic balance. There are increased levels of public consultation, disclosure and scrutiny of the affairs of the Coalition Government than that which existed during the former single-party KANU regime.

The new constitution has ushered in a new political dispensation and has elevated the status of political parties from being purely members' clubs to institutions of public governance in terms of representative democracy. In this context, political parties are important in integrating and mobilising citizens, aggregating and articulating interests, formulating public policy, recruiting policy leaders, and organising parliament and structures of government at national and county levels. Article 92 provides for the regulation and supervision of political parties, the auditing of the accounts of political parties, and legislation to strengthen parties, including, among others, reasonable and equitable media coverage. The new constitution not only creates a new electoral system but also provides for proportional representation during nominations through the party list seats.

Under this new constitutional dispensation, Kenya now has a framework for governance reforms, including a review of the Political Parties Act to put it in sync with the new constitution. This development is an indication of the need to improve the capacity of political parties so they are able to perform their roles and functions effectively.

Apart from the promulgation of the new constitution there has been good progress in terms of implementing the National Accord agenda, except for item two on resettlement of IDPs. This area remains characterised by mismanagement, manipulation, corruption and inefficiency among the duty bearers and government agencies charged with the responsibility of resettling post-election IDPs.

Despite some successes, the Grand Coalition government has experienced numerous challenges similar to those experienced by the NARC Coalition. These include the lack of a comprehensive constitutional and institutional framework for its establishment, its ineffective and inefficient service delivery, and its lack of consultation and adequate procedures. For instance, the decision-making and communications protocol in Kenya's coalition government is not clear, as evident by the confusion and contradiction in government statements issued by the state and other public offices. There has also been a failure to harmonise the policies of the different parties that make up the coalition, as well as a lack of political goodwill.

Duale and Kioni maintained that a coalition government requires tolerance, transparency, dialogue and consultation among the partners involved. There is a need to set up clear guidelines for the formation, regulation and management of coalition governments.

4.5.2 Zimbabwe case study

Zimbabwean MP **Olivia Muchena** outlined some of the problems experienced by the political parties in the functioning of Zimbabwe's coalition government. The initial problem stems from the fact that the formation came out of a deadlock-breaking mechanism advocated by the South African Development Community and the African Union, rather than out of internal negotiations. In forming the inclusive government, the parties need to work out antagonisms and demystify rumours and thoughts of the 'other'. Several practical initiatives have been put in

place to encourage dialogue between the parties, including a fieldtrip to promote inclusiveness and mixed seating in parliament. These interventions try to build a culture of understanding; but the structural processes through which the power-sharing agreement works have given rise to tensions.

If the 'inclusive government' notion is overworked and pursued as an end goal it will collapse, as currently the parties view each other with suspicion and have alternative agendas. Pressure from outsiders limits policies proposed by the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). Muchena called for total independence and the empowerment of Zimbabweans. For democracy to take root Zimbabwe needs to empower people and include issues of gender (women).

Hon. Lovemore Moyo, Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) national chairman, argued that electoral outcomes have been in dispute in many African countries. There has been a failure to enforce the outcome of elections as incumbent governments refuse to hand over power to the winner and use the state apparatus to keep themselves in power.

Key persons in the military and police have been known to refuse to accept or salute presidential candidates, even if elected by popular vote. This behaviour needs to be strongly condemned as it promotes fear and defeats the democratic process. There is a need to enact laws curbing the power of incumbents, who in many cases have an unfair advantage over other presidential candidates because of their control over state resources and state machinery, which they use as a tool to retain power during and after elections.

Zimbabwe today is a multiparty state that emerged from a period dominated by one political party; however, the multiparty infrastructure is weak. In the early stages of independence a loose coalition arrangement between two major political parties, ZANU and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), was formed. The coalition was, however, short-lived and dominated by accusations, physical attacks and the arrest of ZAPU members. An estimated 20,000 civilians were killed through state-sponsored violence.

The political playing field in Zimbabwe has never been level; it has always been manipulated. Violence has been used during elections against voters perceived to be sympathetic to opposition parties, the police force has been used to hinder campaigning through misapplication of the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), and the state broadcaster has not informed citizens in a fair and unbiased manner, covering mainly the ruling party.

The Access to Information Protection and Privacy Act and POSA have been counterproductive. The net effect of these laws has been to inhibit freedom of assembly and mass mobilisation by opposition parties while simultaneously stifling press freedom.

Despite the systematic and brutal attacks and arrests perpetrated against the MDC leadership, the MDC and ZANU-PF signed the Global Political Agreement in September 2008, which led to the formation of a coalition government between the two parties on 13 February 2009.

The coalition has experienced several challenges, including ideological differences and priorities,

and selective application of the law has destroyed the effect of the coalition. Achievements to date include bringing down the inflation rate, economic stability and the supply of basic food commodities, and improvements in social service delivery – most schools have reopened to learners and most health institutions can offer healthcare to ordinary Zimbabweans.

Moyo maintained that there is a need to protect countries against a dominant one-party system and to promote a multiparty culture for political maturity. Countries should be led peacefully, and parties must find common ground and strengthen dialogue for the good of all citizens.

SESSION 5

PARTY FINANCING

5.1 CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN POLITICAL PARTY FUNDING AND SUSTAINABILITY

Professor Anthony Butler of the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, referencing his recent book *Paying for Politics: Party Funding and Political Change in South Africa and the Global South* (Jacana, 2011), which explores dilemmas of party and political funding in middle-income countries, argued that money is necessary for democratic politics, but that it is also dangerous.

The financing of parties on the African continent has moved through three phases: dependency on foreign sources in the colonial era; post-independence dependency of ruling parties on 'informal' state funding; and the emergence of opposition fund-raising from civil society and international donors. Patronage, clientelism and corruption are important factors in political finance across the developing world.

Unregulated funding has repeatedly been implicated in political corruption because money can be exchanged for policy influence, licences or government contracts. Parties with disproportionate access to resources can buy votes, monopolise air time during campaigns, and dispense jobs and patronage to supporters. The rich can buy access to ministers and officials and deny the poor any say in government decisions. Where parties have asymmetrical access to private and public resources, as is the case in most of Africa, dominant parties can ultimately secure an unhealthy stranglehold on politics. Within parties, factional or candidate war chests can become essential for candidates to rise on party lists and win internal elections.

Money given in return for implicit or stated favours has a corrupting effect on a political system. It also undermines the trust and legitimacy on which a flourishing democracy depends. The poor are excluded from political equality that democracy promises.

There are four broad types of funding reform available: the control of private donations; public funding; expenditure limits; and transparency. Finance reforms are ostensibly designed to increase transparency and reduce corruption. However, they can advantage party bureaucracies over candidates and activists, entrench dominant factions, and divide opposition parties.

A variety of regulations can be put in place to limit influence-buying by wealthy individuals or corporate donors, and to control the allegedly pernicious influence of private donations on political life. Certain kinds of donors can be banned, for example, foreigners, trade unions, state-owned enterprises, party-related or -owned businesses, beneficiaries of government contracts or recipients of state licences. Donations from individuals or companies can be capped or overall contribution limits can be applied. Gifts can be channelled for particular purposes, such as political education, research, polling or party building. Sanctions against offenders can include compensation payments to other parties, the withholding of public funds, fines or prison terms.

Nonetheless, regulation caps on private donations are difficult to implement and tend to produce a plethora of negative unintended consequences. Donations can easily be hidden or disguised, parties or candidates can fail to disclose payments, and they can produce inaccurate accounts, identify loopholes or use financial instruments that regulators and auditors cannot understand. They can disguise donations as loans, hide them in commercial transactions, package them to fall under thresholds, create opaque legal trusts, or divert funds to political foundations or other party-aligned institutions. Money intended for specific benign purposes can be diverted into campaign funding.

For these reasons, controls on private donations tend to result in many problems. Money goes underground. It is diverted secretly to candidates, resulting in 'personalism' and instability within party structures. Funds are more generally diverted through hidden channels and party bosses lose track of them. Sophisticated companies grow in power because of their greater capacity to disguise and distribute transfers widely. Bans on party donations usually result in the diversion of funds to NGOs, political foundations, or party-aligned or -owned news media. This can create a serious threat to basic democratic freedoms. Unrealistic laws result in selective enforcement.

Public political funding has been an increasingly widespread response to the challenges of private funding. State funds limit parties' immediate reliance on benefactors, arguably reducing corruption and increasing transparency. Formal state funding most often takes the form of direct grants to parties. Eligibility criteria usually reward parties for previous electoral successes and often include thresholds to discourage very small parties. A strong case can be made for increasing the size and scope of public funding of political parties and for improving the mechanisms of oversight of this funding. There are, however, complications. State transfers may supplement rather than replace private money. In addition, the importance of ordinary party members tends to decline because the party no longer needs their money. Public funding strengthens the relationship between the party and the state as parties seek funding from the state.

Spending controls have been another popular mechanism to manage particular and exceptional campaign costs, notably political advertising. The effectiveness of contribution and expenditure controls depends on the effectiveness of disclosure systems. The limited capability of states to regulate financial transactions uniformly and equitably results in the selective and politicised application of the law.

Political finance reforms must be pragmatic if they are to succeed, and legitimate if they are to be widely enforced. It is essential that new laws are suited to the implementation capacity that the country possesses. The state cannot be considered a neutral arbiter. Factions within governing parties penetrate and control public institutions – even allegedly independent electoral commissions. Regulations must be rule bound and non-discretionary so that they lie beyond the reach of partisan and factional politicisation. Informal money flows matter more than formal ones. In middle-income developing countries, hidden and often illegal public sector funding of parties is accomplished by the diversion of revenue from state-owned enterprises, the transfer of public funds to party-owned companies, the allocation of state jobs and contracts, 'pay to play' conventions that allow only donors access to government work, and the abuse of state

resources for election campaigning. Finance reform appears both necessary and straightforward. Unfortunately, it never works as anticipated and can lead to unanticipated consequences.

5.2 EFFECTIVE PUBLIC FUNDING REGULATORY REGIMES

Gèraldene Chaplog-Louw of the Electoral Commission of South Africa examined the regulatory framework for public funding in South Africa, namely: rules for the allocation and spending of state funding; how much money is available; accountability of parties; where money should not be spent; and legislation for using funding to level the political playing field. She maintained that although public funding for political parties exists, this benefits the major parties while small parties are frequently neglected.

Funding allocations to parties in South Africa are relatively adaptable and can be used by parties to help them function better in a democracy. There is, however, a provision in the law which states clearly what funding should not be used for, including for business purposes.

Parties that receive public funding are required to perform regular reporting and independent auditing of spending, and must produce statements that hold them accountable. The regulatory commission is then free to scrutinise the audited statements.

SESSION 6

POLITICAL PARTY BENCHMARKS

Based on the principle that democracy is dependent on, *inter alia*, well-functioning political parties, it is suggested that one way to address the challenges faced by parties is by developing political party benchmarks for enhanced democratic governance within and between political parties in Africa. Benchmarks in this context are a set of indicators, norms and principles which reflect practices and behaviours that citizens can expect of their parties, regardless of ideology, geographic location or size.

The draft benchmarks formulated by the reference group were presented by Raenette Taljaardt and Babu Katulondi. The background to the formulation of the benchmarks was an EISA conceptualisation workshop held on 1 June 2010, the development of a concept paper identifying key issues, followed by reference group meetings held in Johannesburg on 14 and 15 October 2010, and again on 22 November 2010. In addition, six country workshops were held with political parties in Botswana, Chad, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique and South Africa. Owing to political factors the scheduled workshop in Burundi could not take place.

The benchmarks were divided into two broad streams: the political system; and political party institutionalisation and organisational focus.

The goal for the development of benchmarks for enhanced democratic governance within and between political parties in Africa is to enhance the capacity of political parties in Africa to be effective, accountable, responsive, transparent and internally democratic. The benchmarks reflect the role that political parties play and, through the contribution of political parties themselves, address the question of how parties in Africa ought to be institutionalised.

It is important to distinguish between internal and external issues that affect political parties' functions. The internal functioning of parties follows constitutions, rules and regulations, programmes, manifestos, codes of conduct and ethics developed by parties with a view to imbue a particular culture that defines their institutional character. To be institutionalised means to have strength and durability, to be able to withstand crises and to present credible governing alternatives. There are at least five areas relating to the internal organisation of political parties that can provide such criteria: organisational strength; internal democracy; political identity; internal party unity; and electioneering capacity. External systematic issues of particular relevance to the development of the benchmarks include: the party system and its effects on political parties; and the external regulation of parties, including the constitutional and legal frameworks, electoral systems and the party funding environment.

The initiative to develop benchmarks for enhanced democratic governance within and between political parties in Africa is relevant and comes at an opportune time. Different stakeholders are re-examining the issue of party assistance. Recently, bilateral donors, diplomats, international and regional organisations, implementers who focus on political party assistance, as well as political party members, political analysts and a broad range of actors from the peace-making

(mediation, dialogue facilitation), democracy-building, state-building and academic fields converged in Sussex, England, to deliberate on what needs to be done to assist political parties. It was agreed at this conference that while there is a dire need for parties to be assisted, those providing assistance should seek to understand the political context of the countries they might be working in (Wilton Park Conference Report, 2010). Other organisations, including the NIMD and the National Democratic Institute (NDI), have conducted similar initiatives on developing political party benchmarks. These were considered and acknowledged in the development of the benchmarks presented below.

BENCHMARKS

I. THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

I.1 Party systems and legal framework or regulatory instrument

- (a) Basic political freedoms such as the freedom of expression, the freedom to organise politically and the freedom to associate must be protected constitutionally and promoted by leaders and parties.
- (b) There should be public acknowledgement through legal or constitutional mechanisms of the role of political parties in political decision-making and policy formulation. Such party laws may not undermine universally protected individual rights to freedom of expression and association.
- (c) There should be a party law that stipulates what constitutes a party according to constitutional provisions and the law, and anchored in universally recognised democratic principles.
- (d) Political systems need to create the right and the space, and develop a process-oriented mechanism for the contestation of presidential and other electoral outcomes presided over by an independent statutory body. Appropriate dispute-resolution mechanisms need to be well codified and well publicised, and the findings and recommendations of these bodies must be respected by all parties.
- (e) There should be appropriate and adequate public funding laws for represented political parties in parliament on the basis of an agreed formula.
- (f) There should be transparency in the receipt and disposal of private party funding and mandatory disclosure to parliament, EMBs, or any other appropriate statutory oversight and regulatory body.
- (g) There should be maximum campaign spending limits as well as donation limits regulated by laws.
- (h) Political parties should/ought to recognise the role played by traditional authorities/governance structures in enhancing the participation of people.
- (i) Continental and regional bodies must consistently, justly, fairly and faithfully apply electoral and other political and governance principles and standards that these bodies have adopted.
- (j) Parties should comply with the constitutional and legal framework pertaining to gender equality, and where such frameworks are lacking parties should call for their establishment or improvement.
- (k) Parties should call for the adoption, ratification and implementation of international, continental and regional conventions and protocols on women and gender issues.
- (l) The member states should incorporate these standards and principles in their laws and practices.

1.2 Political parties in parliament

- (a) There should be opportunity, and no unfair discrimination, for all elected MPs to participate in all parliamentary decision-making structures and processes, provided they have not violated parliamentary procedure and/or democratic principles.
- (b) Parliamentary rules and standing orders should be clearly codified, with due regard to reasonableness, equity and fairness.
- (c) Irrespective of which party they belong to, elected MPs must be allowed to conduct whatever oversight, monitoring or inspection activities they wish to carry out without interference, let or hindrance. This right of all MPs must be reflected in the rules and orders of parliament and must be sanctioned and protected by law.
- (d) All political parties must comply with a parliamentary code of conduct and/or register of interests with regard to the disclosure of private interests. Where a register or code might not exist, these should be established.

1.3 Political parties and the state

- (a) Parties in government must be compelled not to use the security apparatus as an instrument of the political party while in government and as a private institution. The security services must protect society and the state as a whole, and not the interests and behests of one political party.
- (b) There should be a clear distinction between the roles and functions of the head of state and the party president.
- (c) Access to state information must not be unreasonably restricted. Parties must be able to use this information to fulfil their functions.
- (d) There should be a clear separation between governing party and the state.
- (e) There should be no abuse of state resources by parties and this should be monitored by an independent statutory body.
- (f) Political parties should respect legitimately constituted states/governments, and states/governments must create an enabling environment for the proper functioning of all political parties, including the opposition.

1.4 Political parties and society

- (a) Political parties should be engaged in integrating citizens into public policy processes and into democratic political decision-making through public participation.
- (b) Political parties should be well anchored in society, irrespective of the electoral system.
- (c) Political parties ought to seek regular interaction with different social constituencies in order to legitimate their role in the political system and ensure stability in party competition.
- (d) Political parties should act as servants and instruments of the public good rather than as the owners and bosses of society.

1.5 Political parties and the electoral system/reform

- (a) Political parties are encouraged to review the electoral system regularly to ensure it meets the needs of the people.
- (b) In reviewing electoral systems, political parties should ensure inclusiveness and participation of parties and citizens, and exercise self-restraint in perpetuating incumbency. In doing so, existing civil and political rights must not be diluted.

- (c) Reviews must be conducted with due regard for the need for government formation and stability, political stability, representativeness, accountability and public needs.

1.6 Political parties and EMBs

- (a) There should be regular, structured and agenda-driven consultations and interactions with EMBs, inclusive of all political parties.
- (b) Political parties should recognise the authority and conform to the common rules established by EMBs and relevant electoral laws.
- (c) All parties in each country must subscribe to an enforceable campaigning and a general electoral code of conduct, with sanctions for non-compliance.
- (d) These codes should clearly specify standards for tolerance and non-violence.
- (e) The electoral authorities/commissions should faithfully dispense with their duties and responsibilities without interfering politically and should stick to political and electoral management and administration.

1.7 Political parties' relationship with the media

- (a) Political parties should not monopolise state media / public broadcasters or misuse them for partisan purposes.
- (b) Political parties should not use the private and public media for the purpose of propagating 'hate speech' or intolerance.
- (c) There should be equitable access to the public media / broadcaster for all parties based on an agreed formula.
- (d) Political parties should refrain from unethical and illegal conduct in soliciting media coverage.

1.8 Interaction between political parties

(a) Interaction

- i. Free interaction between political parties should be encouraged.

(b) Contact and dialogue

- i. Cross-party dialogue inside and outside of parliament on key national issues must be encouraged as a method to minimise and prevent conflicts, and must be as inclusive of different stakeholders as possible.

(c) Coalitions /alliances

- i. Coalitions should be based on written agreements and anchored within agreed norms, with a deadlock-breaking mechanism and conflict-resolution provisions built in to them for issues on which consensus cannot be reached.

(d) Competition

- i. Competition among political parties should be free, fair and peaceful.
- ii. Political parties should follow proper channels to resolve disputes peacefully and should respect the authority of legitimately constituted EMBs and courts.
- iii. Interparty peace resolution structures must be enforced in conflict or immediate post-conflict societies.

(e) Contestation

- i. There should be respect for commonly agreed constitutional and legal rules for political interaction, in line with constitutional provisions and the law and anchored in democratic principles.
- ii. Contestation should aim to be based on differences of ideas and policy.

- iii. Parties should subscribe to and abide by the principle of the inviolability of the voters' verdict, as expressed through the outcomes and results of electoral processes that accord with the norms and standards adopted by international, continental and regional bodies.
- iv. Political parties should follow proper channels in challenging election results (i.e. courts).

(f) Campaigning

- i. Campaigning should be based on issues and should be devoid of 'hate speech'.
- ii. Campaigning should be overseen by an independent body.
- iii. There should be a clearly defined code of conduct for election campaigning, with defined sanctions for parties in instances where there is non-compliance.
- iv. There should be no use of state resources for campaigning purposes, except for legally sanctioned public resources for political parties.
- v. There should be regular, structured and agenda-driven consultations and interactions with the EMB that are inclusive of all political parties and which feature conflict-resolution mechanisms.

2 POLITICAL PARTY INSTITUTIONALISATION AND ORGANISATIONAL FOCUS

2.1 Values and principles for political parties

- (a) Transparency
- (b) Integrity
- (c) Honesty / trustworthiness
- (d) Accountability
- (e) Responsibility (towards the public needs and for stable and proper functioning of government)
- (f) Participatory (in their approach to political decision-making and policy formulation)
- (g) Inclusiveness (party organs and membership, gender dimension, youth and other vulnerable and marginalised groups)
- (h) Gender parity
- (i) Responsiveness
- (j) Consensus oriented
- (k) Tolerance
- (l) Fairness
- (m) Solidarity
- (n) A culture of open debate and a fair contest of ideas
- (o) Subscription to human rights
- (p) Non-violence

2.2 Functions of political parties

- (a) Representation
- (b) Political elite formation and recruitment
- (c) Goal/ policy formulation
- (d) Interest articulation and aggregation
- (e) Providing different / alternative policy and political options and choices in offering choices and building plurality in the political system
- (f) Civic education, political socialisation and mobilisation

- (g) Organisation of government and opposition within the rules of the political game. Political parties should strive for the consolidation of social cohesion and state integrity (analytically, this is a 'benchmark' and not a function)
- (h) Conflict mediation

2.3 Institutional functioning of political parties

(a) Transparency, integrity and accountability

- (i) Political parties should have an enforceable code of ethics and code of conduct.
- (ii) Members of political parties should formally subscribe to these codes.
- (iii) Political parties should have an internal whistle-blowing function and internal rules to protect whistle-blowers against arbitrary disciplinary procedures.
- (iv) Political parties should appoint an internal integrity officer.
- (v) Parties should keep and distribute all relevant records and publish all voting outcomes for leadership positions.
- (vi) Parties should keep records and publish all party resolutions and relevant documents emanating from official party meetings and congresses / conferences.
- (vii) Parties should have transparent and democratic voting and appeal processes for all internal party elections.
- (viii) Parties should have quarterly audits of finances and quarterly reports must be submitted to a party internal audit committee.
- (ix) Parties must produce and circulate on party members' demand copies of such records and reports for inspection, scrutiny and study, and create platforms for members to facilitate discussion on these.
- (v) Parties should have internal audit committees.

(b) Intra-party democracy

- (i) Political parties should ensure internal democratic governance in terms of member participation, system of information, management of assets, accounts, audits, administration and intra-party elections.
- (ii) All intra-party procedures should adhere to democratic principles; there should be rules of intra-party conflict management according to democratic norms.
- (iii) Political parties should promote and protect democratic leadership.
- (iv) Parties should have credible and regular rules / process-driven elections at different levels for different positions, with new or renewed mandates to leaders.

(c) Political identity

- (i) Parties should clearly define what they stand for and should distinguish themselves on an ideological and / or programmatic basis.
- (ii) Political parties' membership should be voluntary, open and non-discriminatory.
- (iii) Parties should have a broad vision and policies that form their identity.
- (iv) Party policies must be based on and driven by a realistic agenda that incorporates a set of issues which mobilise constituents in society, leading to an effective differentiation and distinction between the parties.
- (v) Parties should have policies and defined policy-making and policy-formulation processes that are inclusive and participatory of their membership.
- (vi) Party manifestos and policies should translate into a governance and government oversight / monitoring agenda.

(d) Organisational capacity

- (i) Political parties should have regular conferences conforming to the constitutional provisions based on an agenda, and regular meetings of executive structures.
- (ii) Parties should have established processes and structures for decision- and policy-making and communication.
- (iii) Parties should have adequate or appropriate procedures for decision-making (applying and enforcing discipline, consensus building and decision-making through credible due process which is respected and adhered to).
- (iv) Parties should have established processes of communication with the rank and file (inclusive of the grassroots level).
- (v) Parties should have upper limits for the tenure of leadership positions.
- (vi) Parties should recruit and promote women, youth and other marginalised groups within the party's organs as well as to strategic leadership positions in the party and in government, and as party candidates for public office at all levels.
- (vii) Parties should dedicate resources for the purposes of promoting gender parity.

(e) Party policy documents

- (i) Political parties should make publically available basic documents detailing and defining functions, for example, their constitution, internal rules and regulations, vision and political programme.
- (ii) Parties should have a political programme that informs their identity and therefore their policies. This is interconnected and mutually reinforcing.
- (iii) Party policies must be agenda driven with effective differentiation and distinction between the parties. They must incorporate a set of issues and a realistic (implementable) agenda that serves as a basis on which they try to mobilise constituents.
- (iv) Parties should have policies and defined policy-making and policy-formulation processes that are inclusive and participatory.
- (v) Parties should review their policy documents (such as constitutions, manifestos and other documents) to ensure sensitivity and responsiveness to gender issues.

(f) Regular and formal functioning of party organs

- (i) Political parties should have regular conferences that conform to constitutional provisions and which are based on an agenda and regular meetings of executive structures.
- (ii) Party conferences must be representative of the broad party membership and attended by genuine delegates in terms of the party constitution.
- (iii) Parties must have internal communication functions that disseminate information to all members and structures of the party. This information includes decisions, policies, discussions, important dates of conferences and congresses, as well as the names and contact details of office bearers and party structures.

(g) Party leadership

- (i) Political parties should promote and protect democratic leadership.
- (ii) Political parties should aim to capture state or governmental power only through constitutionally legitimate ways.

- (iii) Parties should have credible, regularly elected, rules/process-driven elections at different levels for different positions, with new or renewed mandates to leaders.
- (iv) Party leadership must be elective and changed or disbanded only by democratic means.
- (v) Parties should have processes and structures for decision- and policy-making and communication.
- (vi) Parties should have adequate or appropriate procedures for decision-making (applying and enforcing discipline, consensus building and decision-making through credible due process that is respected and adhered to).
- (vii) Leaders should practise openness and should accept criticism and different ideas.
- (viii) Parties should review their leadership structures to ensure gender parity.

(h) Internal democracy

- (i) Political parties should ensure internal democratic governance – member participation, system of information, management of assets, accounts, audits, administration.
- (ii) Political parties should allow and encourage free intra-party debates and dissenting views by members, and should tolerate criticism of their policies and leaders.
- (iii) Party manifestos and policies should translate into a governance and government oversight/monitoring agenda.
- (iv) Political parties should have internal conflict-management mechanisms.

2.4 Further suggested benchmarks

- (a) The benchmarks should be included in the African Union's African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.
- (b) Like-minded parties at the regional level should put in place forums for sharing information and experiences.
- (c) Indigenous languages should be used where possible to facilitate political discourse and engagement.

APPENDIX 1

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

His Excellency Flt Lt Jerry John Rawlings
Former president of the Republic of Ghana

Director of ceremonies and EISA executive director, members of the EISA board, EISA management team and staff, members of the diplomatic corps, representative of the African Union, the donor community and development partners, cabinet ministers, honourable members of parliament, leaders of ruling and opposition political parties, representatives of regional economic communities, representatives of the election management bodies, representatives of the civil society organisations, members of the academic community, excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure and singular honour to have been invited to be part of this continental symposium organised and hosted by the Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa (EISA).

Allow me to begin by acknowledging the work that EISA does across the African continent, particularly as a leading organisation in the areas of elections, democracy and governance. I would also like to congratulate EISA for organising the annual symposia, which have not only become its trademark but have also positioned it among the leading organisations that seek to promote democratic governance on the continent.

It is also noteworthy that my respected colleague, Sir Ketumile Masire, former president of Botswana, is a patron of the Institute.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I was delighted to learn that this year EISA was organising a symposium focusing on political parties with the view to enhancing the capacity of political parties in Africa, not only to be effective, accountable, responsive and transparent but also to be internally democratic. I believe that this is a profound initiative, hence I did not hesitate to accept an invitation from EISA to deliver the keynote address and officially open this symposium.

Democracy, if it is to work efficiently on the continent, should be a reflection of the indigenous social, cultural and political ethos of our various countries. In embarking on an exercise like this, let us not attempt to create a one-size-fits-all prescription for the continent. It will be a recipe for failure.

Democracy works only when it has evolved within a specific socio-cultural environment and is fused into the traditional political systems such that it is seen as an indigenous product. Unfortunately, Africa has not been given the opportunity to develop this.

None will disagree that today more than any time in the past, political parties are a useful vehicle for the contestation of power in a democratic setting. Parties must be able to provide alternative policy options and should be able to promote representative democracy through providing a plurality of diverse voices and presenting alternative choices. In order to be effective in offering plural choices, parties have to be effective articulators of their policy message and what it is they wish to offer to citizens and society. As such, political parties' ability to provide alternatives to citizens in the choice of representatives and to be an effective voice is crucial.

However, it is evident that our political parties are faced with a myriad of internal and external challenges, which are a setback to their proper functioning. Research on political parties offers many and varied explanations for this. Yet a common observation about political parties in Africa is their lack or absence of internal democracy, lack of leadership skills, poor administrative and policy-making skills, poor financial management skills, lack of clearly defined goals and little ideological differences, lack or absence of gender equality, and lack of conflict management skills and tolerance both within and between political parties.

Ladies and gentlemen, these lapses do not come about as a result of a lack of resources or a lack of competent personnel within political parties. It is oftentimes as a direct result of a misplaced conception that one enters politics to get rich. There is thus little desire on the part of the party machinery to put in place effective mechanisms that will allow parties to operate as an effective autonomous body that is there to protect the interests of members on an equitable basis. Political parties definitely have enough personnel with the requisite competence to implement the above-stated requirements, but individual interests tend to reign supreme.

Individuals, especially on our continent, therefore have a field day monopolising parties either by virtue of their financial wealth or because they are closer to government – that is, if the particular party is in power. Registering members seems not to be the primary objective of most parties, but rather a desire to have a large base of supporters who are not necessarily registered members. Is it not ironic to see political parties galvanise funds from a few individuals who literally buy votes through the provision of cash, motorcycles, bicycles, and other essential amenities for the electorate and naturally expect to be rewarded when elections are won?

It is not uncommon to see the campaign offices of presidential, parliamentary or party executive aspirants properly equipped with every conceivable facility comparable to party offices in other parts of the world, while the actual party offices are still set in an antiquated way of doing things.

Parties no doubt have the capacity to be efficient, to embrace modern technology and management methods and to adopt state-of-the-art communications strategies, but all this will come to nought without empowerment – empowerment of the people, the ordinary people.

Article 27 (8) of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance states: 'In order to advance political, economic and social governance, State Parties shall commit themselves to promoting freedom of expression.'

Let us not be fixated with the adoption of modern party machinery without recourse to the

involvement of the masses who really give life to political parties. Political parties have to justify their existence before the ordinary citizens of our continent, and they can only do so if they endeavour to give true ownership of such institutions to them. A political party cannot boast being a political party if the ordinary folk are not convinced they have a stake at the decision-making level of the party.

I do not prescribe a chaotic situation where an amorphous structure is created, which desires millions of political party followers to contribute to debates before intra-party decisions are taken. I am referring to a decentralised party structure – not just on paper as we find in many countries in Africa – where there is an equitable distribution of opportunities for candidates to party positions, and where contributions are sought from all departments of the party before decisions are taken. Participants will confess that in many parts of the continent party structures at the lowest constituent levels are teleguided by the national executive and favourites are sponsored to win elections, sometimes against the will of the people of the area. Mistrust is thus sown at the lowest level, and there is an unfortunate understanding that even at such a level you must have the support of perceived powerful people within the party hierarchy to be elected into office.

Ladies and gentlemen, let us set benchmarks and put in place a machinery to support such targets, but more importantly let us change our mindset. Let us stop being overprotective of political office by ensuring that a role that is meant to be a service to the people is rather an opportunity to lord over them. Implementing the benchmarks you agree to here is a charge you have to keep; pay lip service to them and this conference would have been a total waste.

Political parties can only be powerful if they do not allow individuals to establish power bases around the party and use them as an opportunity to emasculate the party. Many parties in power, including in Ghana, tend to look up to government as the power base rather than vice versa. Because the party has overlooked the fact that elected leaders, including the president, are servants of the party and, by effect, the people, governments are able to impose their will on the party, further weakening the party structure. These are the issues that have to be at the back of your minds, ladies and gentlemen.

Of particular importance is the application of truth, transparency, judicial consciousness and a desire to help empower the party resource-wise instead of the individual quest for material gain.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I have been advised by the organisers that the specific objectives of developing the benchmarks are to:

- explore practices for the institutionalisation of political parties;
- encourage focus on gender equality within parties for increasing the numbers of women in party decision-making positions;
- explore practices in interparty relations, explore conditions under which party coalitions are possible and establish principles for sustainable coalition building;
- improve existing benchmarks/principles so as to add value to the rebuilding of democratic institutions;

- improve penetration into society and improve constituency building and constituency relations;
- encourage effective representation, accountability, responsiveness and transparency;
- encourage inclusiveness, diversity and representivity;
- encourage political tolerance;
- encourage the empowerment of rank and file party members;
- improve party operational apparatuses, including party management and administration; and
- examine modalities for party funding that are equitable and fair, and which lead to party sustainability.

I have touched on several of these benchmarks already, but one issue that requires a lot of attention is gender equality and increasing the participation of women in decision-making within political parties. Women's emancipation is not just about instituting percentage participation as a sign of commitment, it is about a conscious effort on the part of political parties to push for national legislation which ensures that women are educated to the highest level. It is also about a campaign to ensure that women are self-reliant economically and are given the confidence to take up political office from the grassroots level up.

Lack of education should not be used to intimidate women into shying away from politics. Politics is about what affects us on a daily basis. Women are usually more aware of the deeper problems affecting society, and we need to encourage them to articulate their concerns through their participation in political activity. Demystifying politics will encourage women to participate, and sooner rather than later we will not need to create quota systems, which in a true sense of the word are discriminatory in character.

The European Union Electoral Observation Mission that monitored the 2008 elections in Ghana made some good observations that are relevant to these deliberations and the strengthening of political parties on the continent. It noted that:

The national capacity of political parties needs to be strengthened, including the introduction of proactive measures for ensuring inclusive political party structures. The draft bill on the funding of political parties, based on the principle of proportionality, should be promulgated by parliament. Registration of political parties should be removed from the mandate of the Electoral Commission and transferred to a suitable body.

Party agents should receive more training on their role during elections and an adequate code of conduct should be introduced. They should also receive visibility material identifying them as agents and should refrain from taking on a too proactive role in the process.

The system for campaign spending should be reviewed as it is inadequate. Consideration should be given to placing a ceiling on spending and introducing an appropriate and transparent system for public accountability in campaign spending.

To complement their annual financial reports the political parties should submit accounts of their donations and spending on a bi-weekly basis to a relevant authority for the duration of the campaign period, ensuring maximum transparency.

More extensive and permanent voter and civic education should be introduced throughout the year to inform and educate voters of both their rights as voters as well as registration and voting procedures. The responsible institutions should also ensure this reaches grassroots level and the authorities provide an adequate budget for these activities to be undertaken.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are recommendations that are relevant to all political parties irrespective of their countries of origin and should be factored into your deliberations over the next two days.

By seeking to develop benchmarks for enhanced political party performance for democratic governance in Africa, the fifth annual EISA symposium is relevant and comes at an opportune time as different stakeholders are re-examining the issue of party assistance. Recently, bilateral donors, diplomats, international and regional organisations, implementers who focus on political party assistance, as well as political party members, political analysts and a broad range of actors from the peace-making (mediation, dialogue facilitation), democracy-building, state-building and academic fields converged in Sussex, England, to deliberate on what needs to be done to assist political parties. The main question they reflected on was how assistance to parties can be given without distorting the domestic political process in favour of one political party over another, and, most importantly, that it does not cement power in non-democratic elite structures that might not be amenable to opening up to more democratic processes.

Director of ceremonies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, judging by the goal and objectives of this conference, and by the rich and diverse expertise you have assembled from across the continent and beyond to present conference papers, I am confident and optimistic that you will live up to the task before you. I would hasten to indicate that while your presence here is an indication of your commitment to contribute to the enhancement of the capacity of political parties in Africa to be effective and internally democratic, the real commitment will be judged by your willingness to embrace the principles that will be agreed on at this symposium. Put differently, institutionalisation of political parties will remain a distant mirage regardless of the amount of time and energy EISA and its partners spend unless political parties seriously commit to implement the agreed benchmarks.

As leaders of our countries, we have a responsibility to judge the mood of the people and to always move the political train in a direction that ensures that the populace feel their interests have been served. Democracy makes true meaning when it is the kind of governance that advertises true people power.

It is not the absence of military interventions, which we seem to have achieved to a significant extent, that will restore democracy, freedom, justice and development. What is required is the integrity of the leadership and the ability to empower the people. Leadership should have confidence in our people and not feel intimidated by empowering them.

Are we bold enough to empower the people? Are we prepared to be accountable to the people?

Corruption has persisted because some of our leaders have used state machinery to subjugate the vibrant spirit of the people and silence the opposition. Vested interests from outside have also contributed to perpetuating this by whitewashing such corrupt and autocratic governments.

Ladies and gentlemen, noble human values will be lost if we allow money to be used to persuade us in our votes. Take it if you may, but do not sell your conscience.

In South Africa, so long as there was the painful reality of racism and apartheid, no amount of money being pumped into the elections could prevent an African National Congress victory or the apartheid regime from being removed. This was the struggle to restore and reinstate noble human values. The ethnic factor has also played, and may continue to play, a determinant role until the importance of merit and integrity overrides materialism or money and the negative effect of ethnicity.

A sizeable proportion of Africa is still held down by the ethnic factor, and understandably so in terms of voting patterns. The new and current corrupter of electoral democracy is the misuse and abuse of money. We are sowing the seeds of instability because we are using it to destroy the important human values that serve as an anchor in our civilisation.

What happened here in terms of the party instigating the removal of a sitting president is unheard of in Africa's political history. Instead of our leaders allowing the will of the nation to guide us through our chosen parties we have the tendency to inflict our singular will and override that of the nation.

Power corrupts us and we lose our natural consultative role. Abuses and corruption then set in. Human rights violations become the order of the day and the creative and defiant spirit of the nation, with time, becomes subdued and in some cases emasculated. People end up literally worshipping their oppressors. Unfortunately, discerning voices that begin to draw attention to our deviations are often perceived as the abnormal. The probability of coups and explosions then becomes the obvious option for rescue.

The very democratic right that is exercised by the party in choosing its leader is expected to have the same mandate to correct deviations or to remove him when it becomes necessary. Some are precisely because of the extent to which the executive decides to use power and resources to bribe, corrupt and emasculate the party leadership. The party leadership invariably ends up becoming an appendage of the executive. How then can we expect the party to be able to fulfil its moral mandate?

The resilience and strength that was exhibited by the party machinery here in removing a sitting president speaks volumes, and that is what is lacking in many other multiparty democracies in developing countries. The party in government did not wait to be rejected by the populace. It had the capacity to demonstrate its own corrective mechanism and boldly did exactly that.

This is all we ask for: the ability to recognise the stakes and the capacity to correct them. To take away that right in effect means that the multiparty practice exists only in name. Where, then, lies the difference between an autocratic regime and a so-called democratic regime?

Once again, I congratulate EISA for providing this rare space for both ruling and opposition parties to engage each other to find solutions to the common challenges they are faced with as they endeavour to offer alternative choices and become a voice to the multitudes of their constituents.

Democracy is about what the people want and need, not about what the rulers think the people want or need. Herein lies our responsibility.

Director of ceremonies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, with these few remarks it gives me great pleasure to declare this fifth annual EISA symposium of 2010 under the theme 'Setting benchmarks for enhanced political party performance for democratic governance in Africa' officially open.

I wish you fruitful deliberations as you seek to promote the long-term institutional development for political parties on the African continent.

Thank you.

APPENDIX 2

SYMPOSIUM PROGRAMME



EISA's 5th ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM

SETTING BENCHMARKS FOR ENHANCED POLITICAL PARTY PERFORMANCE FOR
DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA
PROTEA HOTEL WANDERERS, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA
23-24 NOVEMBER 2010

DAY ONE
TUESDAY 23 November 2010

- 08:00-08:45 Registration
- SESSION 1 Welcome, Official Opening and Keynote Address**
Chairperson *Mr Leshele Thoahlane, Chairperson of the EISA Board of Directors*
- 08:45-08:55 **Welcome Remarks** by the EISA Board Chairperson
- 08:55-09:25 **Keynote Address and Official Opening**
His Excellency Mr Jerry Rawlings, Former President of the Republic of Ghana
- 09:25-09:45 Group photo
- SESSION 2 Political Parties and Democracy: Theory and Practice**
Chairperson *Professor Tom Lodge, University of Limerick, Ireland and EISA Board Member*
- 09:45-10:25 **Is Democracy Without Political Parties Possible? Can Political Parties Exist in the Absence of Democracy?**
Mr Mosibudi Mangena, Former South African Cabinet Minister
Professor Mwesiga Baregu, St. Augustine's Catholic University, Tanzania
- 10:25-10:45 **Trends in Trust and Confidence in Political Parties Across the Continent: Afrobarometer Survey**
Professor E. Gyimah-Boadi, Ghana Centre for Democratic Development
- 10:45-11:30 **Discussion**
- 11:30-11:45 Tea break
- SESSION 3 Internal Issues and Political Parties**
Chairperson *Professor Jørgen Elklit, University of Aarhus, Denmark*
- 11:45-12:05 **Alternation and Leadership Succession in African Democracies**
Professor Tom Lodge of University of Limerick, Ireland and EISA board member

- 12:05-12:45 **Case Study on Ruling Parties and the Use of State Resources**
Dr Lucien Toulou, EISA Chad
Mr Zefanias Matsimbe, EISA Mozambique
- 12:45-13:05 **Leadership, Politics, Policy and Ideology**
Professor Mpho Molomo, University of Botswana
- 13:05-13:50 **Discussion**
- 13:50-14:50 Lunch
- SESSION 4a Political Parties, Power and Processes**
Chairperson *Professor Onalenna Selolwane, University of Botswana*
- 14:50-15:30 **Party Systems and their Effects on Political Parties**
Mr Kabasu Babu Kotulondi, EISA-Chad
Mr Roel von Meijenfeldt, Executive Director, Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD)
- 15:30-15:50 **Oil and Water? Political Parties and Traditonal Insitutions**
Professor Mpilo Pearl Sithole, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
- 15:50-16:35 **Discussion**
- 19:00-21:00 **COCKTAIL RECEPTION**
- Chairperson** *Mr Yusuf Aboobaker, Mauritius Electoral Supervisory Commission and EISA Board Member*
- Book Launch**
 Matlosa, K. G. Khadiagala and V. Shale (eds) 2010. *When Elephants Fight: Preventing and Resolving Election-related Conflicts in Africa*. Johannesburg: EISA

DAY TWO

WEDNESDAY 24 November 2010

- SESSION 4a Political Parties, Power and Processes (continued)**
- 08:45-09:05 **Political Parties and Electoral Processes**
Mr Vincent Tobhi, Country Director, EISA-DRC
- SESSION 4b Political Parties, Power and Processes**
Chairperson *Mr. Felix Owuor Odhiambo, Country Director, EISA-Kenya*
- 09:05-10:05 **Party Systems, Coalitions and Stability**
Kenyan Political Parties: ODM, PNU
Zimbabwean Political Parties: MDC, ZANU-PF
- 10:05-10:50 **Discussion**
- 10:50-11:05 Tea break

- SESSION 5 Party Financing**
Chairperson *Ms Raenette Taljaard, University of Cape Town, South Africa*
- 11:05-11:25 **Contemporary Issues in Political Party Funding and Sustainability**
Professor Anthony Butler, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa
- 11:25-11:45 **Effective Public Funding Regulatory Regimes**
Ms Gèraldene Chaplog-Louw, Electoral Commission of South Africa
- 11:45-12:30 Discussion**
- 12:30-14:00 Lunch
- SESSION 6 Political Party Benchmarks**
Chairperson *Dr Christiana Thorpe, Sierra Leone Electoral Commission and EISA Board member*
- 14:00-14:30 **Presentation of Draft Benchmarks**
EISA Expert Reference Group
- 14:30-15:30 **Discussion**
- SESSION 7 Official Closing**
15:30-15:50 **Vote of Thanks and Official Closing**
Ms Ilona Tip, Acting Executive Director, EISA

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- Mr Ebrahim Fakir, Manager, Governance Institutions and Processes
Mr Victor Shale, Senior Programme Officer
Ms Maureen Moloji, Projects Coordinator and Symposium Coordinator
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