



African elections in a complex world: Unlocking the catalytic gridlock for peace and development

Date: Monday 2 December 2024

Time: 14:15-16:45 (GMT+3)

Venue: 3rd floor, UNDP Regional Service Centre for Africa, Addis Ababa (Hybrid)

2024 has been billed as the “super elections” year due to the sheer number of elections taking place in a calendar. At least 3.7 billion people, almost half of the world population in at least 72 countries will participate in elections, most of them for the first time. However, in Africa, every year is a super elections year as the continent holds the greatest number of elections in the world. In a rather dynamic calendar, more than 20 countries are scheduled to hold elections in 2024 in Africa. Despite the mixed democratic quality of electoral processes in Africa, the appetite for democracy still remains high. International IDEA’s Global State of Democracy (GSOD) 2023 Report indicates across every region of the world, democracy has continued to contract, with declines in at least one indicator of democratic performance in half of the countries. The 2024 GSOD report also suggests that countries experiencing net declines in democratic performance far outnumber those with advances, with the greatest declines recorded in the democratic indices on ‘representation’. While a number of elections in Africa have led to democratic political transitions, they have not necessarily translated to transformative governance that attends to the social and economic aspirations of its citizens. Despite this, increasing voter apathy does not necessarily suggest a negative vote for democracy. Evidence from recent survey by Africa Barometer in 39 African countries suggests that 75% of Africans support peaceful and credible elections as the best way to choose their leaders. This sustained appetite for democracy on the back of recent resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government is corroborated by UNDP’s study in partnership with the African Union Commission, “*Soldiers and Citizens: Military Coups and the Need for Democratic Renewal in Africa.*”

On the back of economic challenges, African countries and technical assistance providers have continued to make technological and financial investments in electoral processes over the past three decades. ***Why does the appetite for elections remain high even when developmental progress remains elusive?*** The heavy investment continues to rise in an increasingly complex and polarised world which has impacted on international collective action for democracy. The 2023 Human Development Report underscores that geopolitical quagmires abound, driven by shifting power dynamics among states and by national gazes yanked inward by inequalities, insecurity and polarisation. The recent Pact for the Future, world leaders called for redoubling of international action to build peaceful, inclusive and just societies. In response to the call, ***how can Africa navigate the myriad complexities to deliver elections that provide a platform for citizens to express their quest for accountable governance?***

In partnership with International IDEA, the UNDP Regional Service Centre for Africa, through its Governance and Peacebuilding Dialogue Series, will convene a policy dialogue in Addis Ababa to

examine the above issues with the objective of exploring pathways of making elections more meaningful to African citizens beyond the ballot. The hybrid policy dialogue will convene policy makers, representatives of the diplomatic corps, Civil Society Organisations, Election Management Bodies as well as academia.

AGENDA

14:15-14:35 Opening

Moderator: Moderator: David Omozouafoh

Regional Governance and Rule of Law Advisor, UNDP RSCA

Welcome Remarks:

Ms Nirina Kiplagat, UNDP Governance and Peacebuilding
Coordinator for Regional Service Centre for Africa

Remarks:

Dr Roba Sharamo, Regional Director, International IDEA, AWA

Moderator: Gram Matenga, Head of Programmes International IDEA, AWA

14:35-15:35: Session 1: Elections in Africa: Assessing the elusive quest for developmental dividends

Josephine Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny, Director of
Communications, Afrobarometer Dr Nicole Beardsworth,
Political science lecturer, University of the Witwatersrand
Robert Gerenge, Regional Electoral Advisor, UNDP Regional
Service Centre for Africa *Discussions*

Moderator: Samuel Atuobi, Senior Political/Electoral Officer, African Union Commission

15:35-16:35: Session 2: Making elections meaningful to citizens: Navigating complexities in a polarised world

Mosotho Moepya, Chairperson, Electoral Commission of South
Africa Samson Itodo, Executive Director, Yiaga Africa Akinyemi
Adebola, Principal Electoral Officer, UN Office to the African Union
Olufunto Akinduro, Senior Advisor, International IDEA

Discussions

16:35-17:45: Closing

Dr Roba Sharamo, Regional Director, International IDEA, AWA

Ms Nirina Kiplagat, UNDP Governance and Peacebuilding Coordinator for
Regional Service Centre for Africa