

Symposium Concept Note

Fifth Annual Symposium

Setting Benchmarks for Enhanced Political Party Performance for Democratic Governance in Africa



Background

For the last four years EISA has held annual symposia focusing on themes in the democracy and governance terrain. The first annual symposium was held in November 2006 and examined the challenges of conflict, democracy and development in Africa. The second symposium (October 2007) focused policy discussion on the prospects for sustainable democratic governance in Africa in an environment of poor socio economic conditions and entrenched poverty. The third symposium (October 2008) dealt with the challenges of civil society engagement with the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The fourth Symposium focused on the prevention and management of violent election related conflict in Africa.

This year, the theme of the fifth symposium is **Setting Benchmarks for Enhanced Political Party Performance for Democratic Governance in Africa.**

Political party benchmarks

This symposium will focus on the development of benchmarks for political parties with the aim of enhancing their performance and contributing to their institutionalisation. We aim through this process to support political parties in young and developing democracies in Africa by enhancing their capacity to be effective, accountable, responsive, transparent and internally democratic. His Excellency Jerry Rawlings, Former President of the Republic of Ghana will deliver the Keynote Address and officially open the 2010 Symposium.

Framework

Benchmarks for political parties will be addressed within the framework of four thematic areas:

1. values and behaviours of political parties
2. functions of political parties
3. institutional functioning of political parties and
4. overall party system.

Objectives

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

Symposium Concept Note

- Explore practices in interparty relations
- Explore conditions that facilitate party coalitions and establish principles for sustainable coalition building.
- Improve existing benchmarks or principles in order to add value to the rebuilding of democratic institutions
- Improve penetration into society, constituency building and constituency relations.
- Encourage effective representation, accountability, responsiveness and transparency
- Encourage inclusiveness, diversity and representativity
- Encourage political tolerance
- Encourage the empowerment of rank and file membership
- Improve party operational apparatuses, including management and administration
- Examine modalities for party funding that are equitable and lead to party sustainability.

Stakeholders

The stakeholders expected to benefit from the 2010 EISA Annual Symposium include ruling and opposition political parties from across the African continent, regional economic bodies, the African Union Commission, civil society organisations, media and other international actors.

Donors and supporting agencies

EISA would like to acknowledge the generous contributions of donor agencies and supporting partners in this exciting initiative. We extend our gratitude to the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) for their generous financial support.