

The First Annual EISA Symposium

Challenges for Democratic Governance & Human Development in Africa



8-10 November 2006, Wanderers Club, Johannesburg, South Africa

Background

As part of the celebration activities marking its tenth anniversary, EISA will launch its Annual Symposia in Johannesburg from 8-10 November 2006. The theme for the First Symposium is **Challenges for Democratic Governance and Human Development in Africa**.

The Symposium was expected to attract the participation of about 500 scholars, policy makers, political parties, parliamentarians, government officials, civil society organisations, donors and representatives of African continental and regional organisations, who will deliberate on progress made in the pursuit of democratic governance and human development and interrogate the challenges that remain. The Symposium will make concrete policy recommendations for tackling these challenges.

Focus of the Symposium

Two of the most daunting challenges facing the African continent today revolve around the institutionalisation of democratic governance and the achievement of sustainable human development. It is imperative, therefore, that both academic and policy discourses interrogate exactly how the continent can institutionalise and consolidate its new-found democratic governance since the early 1990s and simultaneously improve the socio-economic well-being of its peoples. The key policy question is this: to what extent does the African continent have the capability to drive the democracy project and the development project in tandem and succeed on both fronts? Strides towards democratic governance in Africa have been fairly impressive since the early 1990s, following the collapse of the Cold War and the demise of apartheid in South Africa, even if some pockets of authoritarian rule and political instability remain in parts of the continent. While progress on the democratic governance front is surely commendable not much progress seems underway in terms of attaining sustainable human development. Why is this so? And should progress in democratic governance, of necessity, be congruent with progress (or lack thereof) in development? Is sustainable human development only assured under a democratic governance regime? Is it not possible to have an authoritarian governance regime in a country, but have a country making impressive progress on the sustainable human development front, as the Asian Tigers proved in the 1980s? We do not intend to foreclose the debate by suggesting any mode of thought or preferring a particular train of argumentation that leads to either a positive or negative correlation between democracy and development. Suffice to observe that the causal linkage or correlation between democracy and development is not a straightforward one and hence requires in-depth research and dialogue among various stakeholders. This is in fact the essence of the Symposium. These are major policy and epistemological questions on whose precise answers the jury is still out. The link between democracy and development has been a cause of raging policy and academic debate for decades.

Symposium Concept Note

The First Annual EISA Symposium aims to make an important contribution to this debate by bringing out evidence of the nature and magnitude of the challenges for democracy and development for the African continent. Indeed the seriousness of governance, democratisation and developmental issues as articulated within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Union (AU) commitment to democratic governance calls for a forum where national, regional and international experts and stakeholders develop strategies to work together if the continent is to register socio-economic and political development.

Topics

The Symposium aims to address various issues with a view to assessing progress on democracy and development in Africa and making recommendations for affective policy interventions. The deliberations will be divided into two segments:

1. general topics and
2. specific topics.

The former will ensure contextual and comparative discussions, while the latter will ensure specific country case studies.

General (contextual) Topics

- Challenges for democratic governance (theory and practice)
- Challenges for sustainable human development (theory and practice)
- Assessment of NEPAD in relation to democracy and development
- Contribution of African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) to democracy
- The agenda of African Union (AU) and Regional Economic Communities for democracy and development
- Globalisation and dilemmas of development and democracy in Africa
- Regional integration and democratic governance

Specific Topics (Case Studies)

- Civil society's role in democracy and development
- Executive-Legislature relations and implications for democracy and development
- The role of the youth in democracy and development
- The role of the private sector in development
- Elections and Democracy
- Practical application of the election guidelines such as the AU Principles Governing Democratic Elections and the Principles for Election Management, Monitoring and Observation in the SADC Region (PEMMO)
- Traditional leadership and democracy
- Foreign Aid, development and democracy
- Political parties and democracy
- The judiciary and democracy
- The bureaucracy, democracy and development
- Local governance, democracy and development
- Gender policies, democracy and development