



Summary Report
ISS Seminar on the PAP's Role in Promoting Democracy, Good Governance and Accountability
Pretoria, 25 August 2008

The African Security Analysis Programme of the ISS, through its project which provides technical assistance to the Pan African Parliament (PAP) hosted a seminar on *The PAP's Role in Promoting Democracy, Good Governance and Accountability* to positively influence debate over the work of the Pan-African Parliament as the upholder of principles of democracy, upholding the will of the people and good governance. The focus of the seminar was to reflect on the role PAP has played hitherto towards the promotion of principles of democracy, good governance, and accountability. This is critical, in view of the cases on the continent where principles of democratic elections and accountability were not upheld.

A number of presentations were made: *Election Perspectives and PAP's Role in Election Observation, Democracy, Elections and Political Parties, A Conceptual Overview; and Election Observer Missions and the Promotion of Democracy in Africa: Lessons and Challenges*; all allowing for positive debate on the work of the PAP through the analysis of its role in election monitoring and observation, and thus ensuring peace and security in Africa.

The presentations analysis provided a number of critical questions which require further scrutiny: The African Union's Constitutive Act provides a framework and the vision for the continent for the upholding of democratic principles; is this vision realistic given recent developments relating to elections on the continent, such as in Kenya and Zimbabwe? Is the continent moving forward or regressing when it comes to democracy and multi-party elections in the representation of the will of the people? What are the institutions tasked with the job of ensuring good governance and accountability doing to uphold these principles? Are elections in Africa about entrenching elites and patrimonial networks, or about representing the people? To what extent are African leaders upholding their commitments to the various legal frameworks pertaining to democratic elections? Is the PAP ready and capable of assuming the responsibilities that flow from its mandate? What impact do PAP's election observations missions and reports actually have when it is merely a consultative body without full legislative powers?

The analysis identified the nature of democracy and elections in Africa as representing a façade for democracy within semi-authoritarian systems. The actual functioning of democracy does not operate as the core power of the government is not

necessarily being affected. The regime hangs on to power and intimidates voters, manipulates state institutions for its own interests while amending constitutions to promote the elites' desires. The presenters also discussed the challenges faced by the PAP in acquitting itself with its role, such as institutional, sustainability and legitimacy challenges. It was highlighted that elections observation is a critical part of attending to democracy on the continent; while at the same time moving towards developing the capacity to monitor in order to intervene where democratic principles are not being upheld. Within this, the participation of African regional groups such as ECOWAS, the AU and the PAP, is critical in affecting a change and enhancing democracy, good governance and conflict prevention. One must also not ignore the important role played by the West and donors in not only encouraging and supporting elections, but also in supporting the participation of African observers and promoting the responsibility of relevant African institutions in enhancing democratic principles.

There is a need for a common approach, methodologies, capacities and expectations to these missions to avoid past mistakes such as what occurred in the latest elections in Togo. More so, the focus should be on the long term and the trajectory of African democracy through a common understanding of democracy, elections and the role of political parties rather than focusing on the criticism of current election fiascos.

In conclusion, the way forward was established as follows:

1. We need a code of conduct that binds all the observers to common rules and standards and ensures consistency in observation.
2. We need to move from election observation to election monitoring and at a later stage to election supervision.

The quality of parliamentarians is critical when choosing members of a mission where these individuals must be professional and committed to their duty of upholding transparent and accountability in elections, without being swayed by personal political convictions. Importantly, one must keep in mind that credible democracy requires credible elections, credible institutions and credible political parties to ensure that democratic principles are entrenched within society.

