

Aid Effectiveness, Political Parties and Media

NAIROBI, 24 – 26 MAY 2008



Parliamentarians from East and Central Africa call for greater involvement in the oversight of aid and the need for continued discussions about the relationship between parliamentarians and the media

CO-organised by the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) and European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA), the 'East and Central African Regional Parliamentary Seminar: Aid Effectiveness, Political Parties and the Media' that took place in Nairobi in May 2008 was attended by over 140 participants. These included Members from eight African and five European Parliaments, leading journalists from East and Central Africa, international experts and civil society representatives.

The seminar raised awareness amongst parliamentarians about the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, and produced hard-hitting parliamentary recommendations for the Accra High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness taking place in September 2008.

The seminar also addressed relations between parliaments, political parties and the media, in light of parliamentarians' duty to guard, protect and support political parties, and recognise the important role played by a free and independent media. Participants discussed draft guidelines for parliamentary and media relations, which will be followed up at a national level. Other key subjects that the seminar addressed included: the importance of involving parliamentarians in debates that concern international agreements; the need to ratify the African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance; and the key role that political parties and media can play in supporting women candidates during elections. •



Hon Abdirahin Haithor Abdi, Speaker of EALA and AWEPA President Dr. Jan Nico Scholten

Results

AID EFFECTIVENESS

During the seminar's discussions on aid effectiveness, participants emphasised that detailed oversight of aid delivery and receipt remains an essential responsibility of parliamentarians in both donor and recipient countries. Delegates approved a set of parliamentary recommendations on aid effectiveness that delegates at the September 2008 Accra High Level Forum will discuss. The recommendations urged that the Accra Agenda for Action should note the importance of parliaments and should commit financial resources to strengthen their capacities; that parliamentarians should be included at inter-governmental and international policy forums; and that the Paris

Declaration Monitoring Indicators should include an indicator of parliamentary control. A delegation of parliamentarians intends to present these and other parliamentary recommendations on aid effectiveness at the Accra meeting. •

POLITICAL PARTIES

Delegates agreed that strong political parties are essential to fair and balanced democracy, and require support if they are to play this role. Delegates also emphasised the importance of supporting women in political parties and as election candidates. Therefore, seminar delegates urged all Member States of the African Union to speed up ratification of the 2007 African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, since the Charter guarantees the protection of political parties amongst other rights.

EALA Members committed themselves to follow up ratification within the East African Community. •

THE MEDIA

Parliamentarians and media representatives participated in lively debates on relations between parliamentarians and the media. Parliaments and media must find a balance so that parliaments can provide adequate access for the media to oversee parliamentary work, and journalists' can maintain accurate, fair and truthful standards of reporting to stimulate public discussion. Participants agreed to discuss a set of draft guidelines for media and parliamentary relations (which Media Focus on Africa proposed) during national country workshops in their individual parliaments. •

Aid effectiveness, political parties and the media are key issues for parliamentarians in East and Central Africa

PARIS DECLARATION ON AID EFFECTIVENESS

The 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness offers an ambitious plan to reform aid delivery. Over 100 countries and donor organizations endorsed the Paris Declaration, which defines donor and partner country commitments, along with a set of indicators to measure progress towards fulfilling the targets by 2010. The Paris Declaration presents the commitments under five themes: Ownership, Alignment, Harmonisation, Managing for Results and Mutual Accountability. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is coordinating the monitoring of the Paris Declaration. In parallel, a broad-based international reference group is coordinating an in-depth qualitative evaluation of the Paris Declaration.

Results from both the monitoring and evaluation processes will be reported to the 3rd High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra, Ghana from 2-4 September 2008. A Civil Society International Steering Group will hold a Civil Society Forum in Accra from 30 August – 1 September. Generally speaking, parliamentarians have not actively engaged in the wide ranging international debates on aid effectiveness, although parliamentary participation is essential to effective oversight of aid agreements and spending. Parliamentarians can play a

crucial part in raising awareness and pushing for reform of aid architecture. ●

MEDIA COVERAGE OF PARLIAMENT

The AU Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance commits governments to promote “freedom of expression, in particular freedom of the press and fostering a professional media”. In a flourishing democracy, parliament and the media are mutually dependent: parliamentarians must use the media to spread their message and explain their policies to the people; and the media requires access to parliaments if they are to scrutinise policy and inform the public about political governance with transparency.

In this relationship, parliament and media often lay blame on the other. Journalists complain that they do not have adequate access to parliamentary debates and information, and that they still face restrictions on what they may print. Journalists urge that parliament should uphold freedom of expression, freedom of information and the ‘right to know.’ Yet, parliamentarians complain about low standards of media reporting, bias, misreporting, sensationalism, dishonest gathering of information and disrespect for privacy. Parliamentarians argue that media houses wield great power and that they must use it responsibly. Some countries in East and Central Africa have codes of conduct for the media, which operate with varying degrees of success. ●



POLITICAL PARTIES AND COALITION-BUILDING

The 2007 AU Charter on Democracy, Elections and Political Governance espouses party pluralism as a prerequisite for democratic society. Since parliamentarians are key players in the maintenance of democratic governance, they must guard, protect and support political parties. This issue remains particularly pertinent in East and Central Africa, where many of the organs of democracy are in the early stages of development, following one-party rule and press restrictions. Coalitions between political parties are increasingly common in the region. Such coalitions pose new challenges to parliamentarians regarding party identity, policy making, and governance. In Burundi, and most recently Kenya, coalitions play central roles in reconciliation processes after periods of political violence. To do so, coalitions rely on a commitment from all participating parties so that they can build trust, confidence and peace through inclusive power sharing which all levels of the community can support. ●

National Level Discussions

During the seminar, participants met in national discussion groups to assess existing legislative and regulatory frameworks which support the media. They gathered action points for further improvement.

In **Rwanda**, a Media Ethics Commission has been established and parliamentarians will strengthen oversight of journalists’ training programmes. The Parliament of **Burundi** passed legislation that protects the media, and it has planned further activities to deepen cooperation between media and Parliament. In the **Democratic Republic of Congo** (DRC), the parliament

is discussing a draft Bill on Media Ethics and it plans parliamentary radio and television stations. The **Republic of Congo** (RC) is also deliberating on a draft Media Bill. In **Kenya**, the legislature passed a Media Bill and parliamentarians will reintroduce a Freedom of Information Bill to the new Parliament, and media will begin live coverage of Parliament. In **Uganda**, the legislature has put in place a Code of Conduct for the Media and parliamentarians will lobby for more media training for MPs and journalists. In **Tanzania**, the legislature is discussing a Media Bill and media has improved its coverage of Parliament. In the new democracy of **South Sudan**, the Legislative Assembly has drafted a Media Bill with stake-

holders, and capacity building workshops are taking place. The **EALA** is also drafting a communications and media strategy. It has established a public relations office, and it will conduct baseline surveys of national legislations to help formulate an EALA media framework.

Although the DRC and RC have ratified the African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, many MPs from other countries were surprised that they saw it for the first time. Parliamentarians committed themselves to encourage ratification and subsequent implementation of the Charter, and to push for greater involvement in discussions over future international agreements. ●

KEY NOTE SPEAKERS

Hon. Abdirahin Abdi, EALA Speaker, opened the seminar by observing that as EALA and national Parliaments in Africa “aspire to improve parliamentary engagement with donors and recipients about aid policy, particular attention should be paid to the need to enhance capacity of Parliaments to play a major role in the issues of aid”. **Dr. Jan Nico Scholten**, President of AWEPA, stressed that aid affects millions of lives in Africa and it is essential to oversee its distribution to ensure that funds benefit the poor in society who need them most. On behalf of the Kenyan Speaker, **Hon. (Prof) Philip Kaloki** stressed that “the media acts as a critical bridge between the legislators and the public” and must be able to operate freely. At the evening reception, **Mr. Francis Ole-Kaparo**, former Speaker of the Kenyan Parliament, warned of the dangers of allying political parties too closely with ethnic divides. He also emphasised that Parliaments should know all the details of aid agreements and implementation: “the notion that only the executive knows what is good for the people is wrong”. **Mr. Pär Granstedt**, Secretary General of AWEPA, committed AWEPA to continue discussing the important issues raised during the seminar. ●

AID EFFECTIVENESS

Ms. Elizabeth Lwanga, UN and UNDP Kenya, said that a number of challenges still remain in managing aid, including conditionalities and predictability. She suggested parliaments could help executives fulfill Paris Declaration principles by engaging in high level debates and shaping aid priority areas. **Mr. Javier Pereira**, Eurodad, urged donors to respect recipient country ownership of the development process. **Mr. Johan van Hecke**, Member of the European Parliament, gave an update about the European Parliament’s work on aid effectiveness that will be presented at Accra. This includes recommendations about better policy alignment, strengthening mutual accountability, and the need for an indicator in the Paris Declaration for democratic ownership and parliamentary oversight. **Mr. Joe Frans**, former Swedish MP, stressed that parliamentarians should increase their engagement in the international discussions on aid effectiveness to equal civil society organisations. **Hon. Kilontsi Mporogomyi**, Tanzanian MP, said that “parliamentarians need to be able to engage in debates with government to advocate policies that reflect local

experiences and perspectives and hold governments to account for policy implementation.” On the one hand parliaments in donor countries must ensure that aid policies adhere to the MDGs, reflect the wishes of the recipient and guarantee that aid is appropriately spent. Yet, recipient parliaments must also oversee aid agreements and spending, though many lack the institutional, administrative and legislative resources to do this. ●

ROLE OF MEDIA IN ELECTIONS

Mr. Salim Lone, Spokesperson for the Kenyan Prime Minister, noted that the media has a large influence on society, and politicians must exercise caution in projecting messages which others may misconstrue. He regretted the shameful role played by some media organisations during the Kenyan election violence, and emphasised the need to remove barriers which limit the media’s work.

Mr. Innocent Muhozi, Renaissance FM



Hon Francis Ole-Kaparo, Former Speaker of the Kenyan Parliament, and Mr. Pär Granstedt, AWEPA Secretary-General



Hon Johan van Hecke, Member of the European Parliament



Hon Linah Jebii Kilimo, Kenyan Assistant Minister and Chairperson of KEWOPA

and TV, claimed that the media played a commendable role in the peace leading up to the 2005 Burundi election, and are developing their capacity before the 2010 election. Prof. Nixon Kariithi, University of Witwatersrand, said that parliaments and media should base their relationship on understanding, mutual respect and tolerance. He regretted that state ownership of media companies in Africa leads to unbalanced coverage during elections, and urged that private media companies should be given more opportunities and journalists given adequate training. ●

OVERSIGHT OF INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

Hon. Loveness Gondwe, Malawian MP and Member of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), highlighted the crucial role that Parliaments must play in the negotiation and harmonization of international agreements. This includes the important Economic Partnership Agreements, which many in Africa view with distrust. Participants also agreed to champion ratification of the African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance in their national parliaments.

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Hon Abdirahin Abdi, Speaker of EALA



Ms Chantal Kanyimbo, President of the Congo National Press Union

More information

See the ‘Projects’ section on www.awepa.org for seminar information in English and French including the recommendations, working group reports, speeches, participants list and programme.

► *Speeches cont. from previous page*
SUPPORTING WOMEN CANDIDATES

Hon. Linah Jebii Kilimo, Assistant Minister for Cooperative Development in Kenya and Chair of KEWOPA, said that women face challenges in politics such as paternalism, unsupportive families and lack of knowledge. She proposed solutions that included establishing quotas, training and strong women's networks. **Ms. Chantal Kanyimbo**, Congo National Press Union, said that the 2006 constitution entrenched gender parity in the DRC, but that few women contested the elections and there are only 42/600 women MPs. Kanyimbo argued that a law to compel political parties to support women candidates ►

would help the situation and the media could support this by discussing women's rights issues. **Princess Kabakumba Masiko**, Ugandan MP and Chief Whip, said that since 1995, affirmative action has placed more women in decision making positions in the Ugandan Parliament. She claimed that media coverage of women's issues remains infrequent and often negative, and that media training on women's equality should be funded. **Hon. Vicky Katuma**, MP from DRC and Member of RFPAC, said that funding for political parties should be contingent on gender equality. However, Katuma was encouraged by the steady progress women have made in parliaments across Africa. •



Working group in session

WORKING GROUPS

The first working group discussed draft guidelines for parliamentary and media relations. After input by **Mr. Frank Klein**, Media Focus on Africa, and **Mr. Ignatius Kagagambe**, New Times, Rwanda, the participants decided to discuss the draft guidelines in detail at a national level. The second working group focused on Reconciliation and Coalition Building in a Multi-Party democracy, and received an explanation by MP **Hon. Anicet Niyongabo** of how Burundi had dealt with this sensitive issue. •

Programme Descriptions

The seminar was a combined activity under three major AWEPA programmes. The first is a programme to engage parliamentarians in the aid effectiveness debate, funded by Sweden, which AWEPA is undertaking with other global parliamentary partners in 2008. Regional seminars will culminate in a large parliamentary forum on aid effectiveness in September. The second programme constitutes a series of regional seminars and national follow-up

workshops which aim to strengthen stability and development in the Great Lakes Region. The Netherlands funds this large programme, which runs from 2005-2009. The seminar on political parties and media falls under the programme theme of 'strengthening the ground rules of parliamentary democracy'. The third programme, which Ireland funds for 2007-2009, gives wide-ranging support to strengthen the capacity of the East African Legislative Assembly. •

AWEPA and EALA thank the Dutch, Irish and Swedish governments for their support of the seminar.



About AWEPA and EALA

AWEPA is an international NGO that supports parliaments in Africa and works to keep Africa high on the political agenda in Europe. It has some 1500 current and former parliamentarians as members from the European Parliament and European national parliaments. AWEPA works in Africa through capacity building programmes to strengthen the core functions of parliaments: oversight, representation and legislation. In Europe, AWEPA members work to increase the commitment among parliamentarians and other political leaders towards important issues in Africa.

The **EALA** is one of the seven organs of the East African Community and in June 2007 the second Assembly was sworn in. With its seat in Arusha, Tanzania, the EALA is the independent legislative arm of the EAC. It provides a democratic forum for debate and has an independent watchdog function. The EALA is made up of nine Members from each of the EAC States (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda) and ex-officio Members. •

The Way Forward

In response to the discussions held in Nairobi in May 2008, AWEPA will facilitate national level follow up workshops on the theme of parliament, political parties and the media in 2008/9. These will take place in Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo. In addition, the discussions on aid effectiveness will be taken forward at a large "Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development and Aid Effectiveness". The Forum will take place in Nairobi from 26-28 August 2008 in partnership with EALA and the Pan-African Parliament, and the results will be taken forward to the September High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra. •

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