

**COMMUNIQUE ADOPTED BY PARTICIPANTS AT THE END OF THE INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON EMERGING DEMOCRACIES IN AFRICA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES
ORGANIZED BY NILS IN COLLABORATION WITH EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARIANS WITH
AFRICA (AWEPA) AND CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARY CENTRE AT TRANSCORP HILTON HOTEL,
ABUJA, JUNE 17TH – 18TH, 2013**

Whereas the conference on *Emerging Democracies: Challenges and Opportunities* was organized by the National Institute for Legislative Studies, with the goal of providing a platform for critical discussion on the opportunities as well as challenges facing emerging democracies. The conference took place in Abuja on June 17-18, at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel. More than four hundred and fifty participants from international, regional and national institutions attended the conference. These participants came from diverse backgrounds including national and regional parliaments, academia, politics, civil society, international organizations, media and the general public;

And whereas the National Institute for Legislative Studies organized the conference in keeping with its mandate to build capacity in legislative practices and to promote democratic development in Africa at national and regional levels;

Noting that the conference began with Welcome Remarks by the Director General of NILS, Dr. Ladi Hamalai MFR; Official Opening Speech by the Distinguished Senate President, David Mark GCON; a Keynote address by former President of the Republic of Ghana, Ft. Lt. (Rtd) Jerry John Rawlings; and Remarks by the former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Earnest Shonekan, GCFR; and additional contributions from other Special Invited Guests;

Recognizing that the Conference Session Chairs, Presenters and Discussants included eminent and distinguished speakers including Senator David Mark, GCON; Senator Ken Nnamani, GCON; Senator Ike Ekweremadu, CFR; Rt. Hon Aminu Waziri Tambuwal, CFR; Rt. Hon Emeka Ihedioha, CON; Chief Earnest Shonekan, GCFR; Rt. Hon. Mathurin Coffi Nago; Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala; Dr. Okwesileze Nwodo; Prof. J.I. Elaigwu; Amb. Egeviome Eloho Etobo; Prof John Adair, Dianne Abbott MP; Prof. O. Nnoli, Prof. Festus Iyayi, Sen (Prof) O. Osunbor; Rt. Hon. Aminu Bello Masari; Mr. Jean-Paul; Ms Kim Phan; Mr. Dotun Ajayi; Dr. Bello Ghaji; Rt. Hon. Margaret Nantongo Zziwa; Rt. Hon. Ghali Umar Na'abba; Prof. Donald Cunnigen; Ade Mamonyane Lekoeje; Mrs Saudatu Mahadi;

Affirming that participants acknowledged the timeliness of the conference, considering the indispensability of good governance in ensuring sustainable development;

The conference, having **highlighted** the following as challenges of emerging democracies:

- i) Deep rooted corruption within the body polity;
- ii) Lack of internal democracy in governance institutions;
- iii) Weak financial capacity of state institutions;
- iv) Burgeoning youth population without access to employment;
- v) Recurring conflicts resulting from ethnic, religious and political tensions;

- vi) Inconsistent and often duplicative job creation policies;
- vii) Weak oversight role of parliaments over the Executive;
- viii) Violation of human rights;
- ix) Endemic poverty;
- x) Weak educational and technological base;
- xi) Infrastructure deficit which serve as disincentive to investment;
- xii) Lack of clear and effective policies on political party funding;
- xiii) Poor leadership; and
- xiv) Often recurring conflict between the Executive and the Legislature.

Furthermore, the conference, having also identified the following **opportunities** of emerging democracies in Africa:

- i) General commitment to democratic development as demonstrated in various peaceful transitions across the continent;
- ii) Growing intra-African investment;
- iii) Untapped human and natural resources;
- iv) Increasing integration as evidenced by mutual support during crisis;
- v) Well informed citizens with expanded and ever-increasing access to information;
- vi) Increasingly assertive media, civil society and judiciary;

Now, therefore, we the participants:

- 1) **Recognized** the need to strengthen the institutions of democracy such as the judiciary, the legislature, security services, the electoral machinery and free press, as a pre-requisite for sustainable development in Africa;
- 2) **Confirmed** that despite the pitfalls of democracy, it remains the best option of governance open to Africa, and therefore urge Africans to deepen democratic processes within the context of national systems and structures;
- 3) **Applauded** African countries that have embarked on successful democratic reforms, while **noting** the prevailing need for sustained efforts to address recurrent pockets of instability and poor governance in the region;
- 4) **Urged** governments to link democratic governance with the provision of basic needs of citizens, and thus ensure that democracy yields maximum dividends by combating corruption and promoting equitable, transparent, stable, inclusive and accountable governance;

- 5) **Strongly encouraged** African leaders to address residual factors which provide fillip for instability and despair, such as high level of unemployment, ethnic, tribal and religious tensions;
- 6) **Further encouraged** African countries to seriously explore the benefits of public-private-partnership arrangements to bridge funding deficits of infrastructure projects;
- 7) **Strongly supported** current initiatives by the National Assembly of Nigeria to ensure administrative independence and financial autonomy of Nigeria's State Assemblies
- 8) **Lauded** African countries' efforts to address the problem of youth unemployment through various initiatives including long term structural reforms and short term interventions, noting in particular, the increasing emphasis on promoting agricultural productivity and employment;
- 9) **Noted with admiration**, the practice in Nigeria that entitles the National Assembly, through the first amendment to the 1999 Constitution, to its own budget as a first line charge on the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the Federation, thus bringing to an end the era of using the release of its funds as an instrument by the executive to force the legislature to toe its line. This practice may be emulated by other African countries whose parliaments are still subjected to Executive control;
- 10) **Extended deep appreciation** to all the Session Chair Persons, Speakers, Presenters, Discussants, Participants and the conference organizers - the National Institute for Legislative Studies, for putting together a sterling conference.

JUNE 18,, 2013, ABUJA, NIGERIA