

Communiqué

Afrobarometer-OSF workshop on the future of democracy

27-28 July 2019, Accra, Ghana

Introduction

Afrobarometer and the Africa Regional Office of the Open Society Foundations (OSF/Afro) have agreed on a strategic map to guide a path of actionable collaboration among key African regional and sub-regional institutions, as well as independent research think tanks, to advance the cause of democratic governance, peace, and security in Africa.

This accord was reached at the Future of Democracy Workshop, co-organized by Afrobarometer and OSF/Afro in Accra on 27 and 28 July 2019, to deliberate and share insights on the delivery of democratic governance, clean elections, peace, and security in Africa relative to the aspirations and expectations of its citizens, and to devise measures for closing outstanding gaps.

The workshop participants included technical representatives of the African Union (AU) Department of Political Affairs and Africa Governance Architecture, Open Society Initiative for East Africa (OSIEA), Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS), Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC), Institute of Democratic Governance (IDEG), The Conversation, and Afrobarometer.

Discussions on persistent gaps in democratic governance, peace, and security and the growing tendency toward “democracy capture” in Africa

The discussions began with a presentation of selected findings from Afrobarometer surveys (particularly Round 7 surveys in 34 African countries conducted between late 2016 and late 2018), which confirmed the following:

- a. Strong and largely sustained popular support for democratic, accountable, and responsive governance across the continent, while perceived supply of the benefits of democratic governance continue to lag behind popular aspirations
- b. Shrinking civic and political space in Africa, with fewer citizens reporting they feel free to say what they think, and more saying they have to be careful what they say about politics
- c. Declining popular support for media and associational freedoms, with a substantial proportion of Africans willing to accept government restrictions on individual freedoms in exchange for public security
- d. Peace and security challenges, with four in 10 adult Africans reporting feeling unsafe walking in their neighbourhood; three in 10 living in fear of crime in their home and/or experiencing theft from their home; and about one in 10 saying they were physically attacked during the previous year. In addition, three in 10 reported having feared violence at political events and/or violence in their neighbourhood and/or by extremists during the previous two years. And in 14 countries where questions were asked about violent extremism, two in nine respondents said they have feared becoming a victim.

During the plenary session, participants identified low levels of transparency in governmental transactions; weak political accountability, including parliament's inability to exercise its oversight mandate; shrinking civic space, including dwindling public support for basic freedoms; and neo-colonialism as key constraints to effective political governance in Africa.

Poor political governance was in turn blamed for Africa's persistent economic and social development deficits, including economic hardship (which is driving emigration) and weak delivery of public services to the poor.

It was recommended that attention also be given to broader contextual issues such as food insecurity and other forms of insecurity created by technology (e.g. related to privacy, data protection, banking, and other financial transactions) in addressing Africa's persistent democratic governance gaps and related development challenges.

Opportunities for enhanced collaboration between Afrobarometer and African Union and allied independent pan-African research institutions to promote democratic governance/peace/security in Africa

Participants identified a number of opportunities for cooperation and collaboration (particularly in the areas of research, analysis, and data sharing) by Afrobarometer and AU structures and related independent African research institutes.

The African Union (AU): Afrobarometer will provide technical support to the AU in the implementation of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) framework and Agenda 2063, including working with relevant AU sub-structures to help with the development of appropriate indicators for monitoring progress in the areas of democracy and credible elections. Afrobarometer will also help strengthen the AU's engagement with national governments.

The African Governance Architecture (AGA): Afrobarometer will support the AU via the AGA in the implementation of the ACDEG framework and Agenda 2063. Afrobarometer agreed to explore partnerships aimed at feeding Afrobarometer data and analysis into AGA reports at the national level and strengthening the knowledge management component of the AGA platform.

- Afrobarometer is to provide indicators and trend data for the AGA's Africa Charter on Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration and the review of the Charter on Democracy (particularly the provisions on sanctions and constitutional changes of government).
- The AGA will leverage existing Afrobarometer data for effective engagement of Special Technical Committees, capacity building, and knowledge sharing.
- Afrobarometer will be designated as "Friend of AGA" and given direct entry to the AGA platform to contribute to policy briefs, provide background papers on theoretical frameworks, and serve as "experts" at various seminar series. The AGA will facilitate a presentation on the value Afrobarometer can add to the work of the platform at one of its technical meetings.
- Suitable candidates from member organizations of the AGA platform will be encouraged to attend the Afrobarometer Summer School to strengthen their data analysis capacities.
- The AGA will share its annual plan with Afrobarometer so it can effectively provide input and contribute to the AGA's work.
- On request, Afrobarometer will provide special policy papers, such as analyses of the state of democracy in Africa.

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM II) has been tasked by the AU to produce the State of Affairs in Governance Report (covering five thematic areas: transforming leadership, constitutionalism and the rule of law, peace and security, development and governance, and the role of regional economic communities and their contributions to

governance). The APRM and Afrobarometer will sign a memorandum of understanding to formalize a partnership in which Afrobarometer will provide a rich source of cross-country, regional, and trend analyses of key thematic areas that align with the APRM's core mandates, especially as Afrobarometer looks to extend its footprint to other African countries. The APRM will in turn become a channel of conveying Afrobarometer's public opinion findings to relevant powers. The two parties will agree on methodology and indicators once the APRM identifies relevant areas and data needed for these tasks. It was also suggested that the APRM organize high-level dialogues, such as annual fora where Afrobarometer data can be shared.

The Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) recognizes that Afrobarometer is a vital data source. AB data has been frequently used in the Institute's reports on conflict, peace and security, migration, transitional justice, and border governance. The Institute also sees Afrobarometer as a potential source for reliable data on returnees, refugees, and displacement. Accordingly, it will explore options for formal partnership and issuance of a simple letter of consent to regulate data sharing between the two institutions. The IPSS will send a template of the agreement to Afrobarometer and also invite Afrobarometer to participate in the Post-Tana Regional Multi-Stakeholder Forum, in Dakar (October 2019).

Themes/topics identified as the focus of collaborative research and data sharing include migration and border governance, gender, peace and security, strong democratic institutions, the role of the military in democratic governance, electoral architecture, and youth engagement.

As an immediate step forward, participants were urged and agreed to study Afrobarometer's Round 8 questionnaire and revert to Afrobarometer on areas that fit their data needs.

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