



PAN-AFRICAN ELECTORAL SUMMIT (PAES)

PRESENTED BY

**THE INSTITUTE OF ELECTION MANAGEMENT SERVICES IN AFRICA IN
COLLABORATION WITH THE BMI INVITE YOU TO THEIR INAUGURAL ANNUAL
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

CONFERENCE THEME:

**ELECTIONS, DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA - BUILDING
AFRICAN DEMOCRATIC CONSCIOUSNESS**

Dates: 8-10 May 2024

Venue TBC (in Johannesburg)

CONCEPT NOTE

Regular, free and fair, elections are the hallmark of democracy. The transfer of political power through the ballot – not through the barrel of a gun – is what makes democracy to thrive. In 2024 we shall witness over 64 countries worldwide and more than half of the world's population, i.e., an estimated 3,65 billion voters going to the polls to give mandates to their countries' preferred political leadership. Although the concept of democracy has its own pitfalls and critiques, conducting elections is considered a key aspect of democracy since it provides a platform for citizens to express their leadership wishes and desires. The frequent elections are intended to usher in a constitutional order that brings about accountability and institutional performance where citizens have a say in the affairs of their governments. Often, legitimate governance structures that enable citizen engagement need to be created to facilitate and consolidate such initiatives if democratic gains and elections outcomes are to be meaningful and impactful. Legitimate structures and institution are critical to develop and maintain public trust. In that way, realising successful election, democracy and governance processes would be enhanced and make a developmental project on the continent better.

The African Union Agenda 2063 is a critical document that serve to provide some roadmap and measures that are intended at maintaining democratic processes. Aspiration three of this AU Agenda 2063 provides:

'An Africa of good governance, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law'

The Agenda expects African governments to use their institutions to comply with good governance principles and transformative leadership which embeds democratic participation processes. It is on this basis that this AU vision would be realised on the African continent.

The work of Frantz Fanon in the *Wretched of the Earth* sums up this discourse and reminds us about the importance of a national consciousness. If Africans are committed to dismantle the vicissitude of colonialism, poverty and inequality, only functional democracies ushered in through well organised and informed electoral systems are the only vehicle. Fanon provides an apt posture when engaging the notion of trials and tribulations of the national consciousness thus:

“...History teaches us that the anti-colonial struggle is not automatically written from a nationalist perspective. Over a long period of time, the colonised have devoted their energy to eliminate inequities such as forced labour, corporal punishment, unequal wages, and the restrictions of political rights. This fight for democracy against man’s oppression gradually emerges from a universalist, neo-liberal confusion to arrive, sometimes laboriously, at a demand for nationhood. But the unpreparedness of the elite, the lack of practical ties between them and the masses, their apathy and, yes, their cowardice at the crucial moment in the struggle, are the cause of tragic trials and tribulations” (Fanon, 1963:159).

Fanon (1963) provides a relevant critique regarding how adopting democracy requires at least a national consciousness of the relevant societal classes, especially the elites. Conducting regular elections and maintaining strong government institutions would provide a much-needed intervention to make democracy meaningful for citizens in Africa. However, it is clear that the post-colonial African project remains challenged and murky despite regular elections. Indicators of poverty, unemployment and inequality shows a deepening governance crisis many decades after the colonial project and despite regular elections.

SUB-THEMES

In order to facilitate a meaningful discourse, the following three sub-themes are considered for this conference although contributors are encouraged to participate even if their papers fall outside these themes while addressing election related matters:

Sub-Theme: Democracy

The notion of democracy means that popular participation in elections and other forms should be tied to the constitutional arrangements. The overall intention of such democratic participation platforms is to bring about socio-economic development, among other things. Without popular participation and improved socio-economic development, the notion of democracy remains meaningless and thus, the national consciousness demands reignition. It is also embedded in this discourse that critical aspects of both procedural and substantive democracy need to be advanced.

- African leadership and nationalist consciousness
- Substantive democracy
- Procedural democracy
- Institutions supporting democracy
- Separation of powers and democracy
- Human rights and the rule of law
- The role of technology in supporting democracy

Sub-Theme: Good governance

When public institutions are considered to be democratic and accountable, they should be adhering to the principles of good governance. Accountability mechanisms are usually institutionalised especially through democratic institutions such as legislatures, courts, civil society, as well as auditor generals and ombudsmen's offices. It is through these institutions that public policies and actions of both political and administrative leaders are put to scrutiny to enforce adherence to the constitutional muster.

- Accountability structures and transparency

- Building strong public institutions
- Corruption and political patronage
- Liberation movements and governance
- Politics-administrative interface
- E-government and M-government

Sub-Theme: Elections

There are 24 African countries that will go into elections in 2024 and South Africa is among them. Looking at democracy and elections in the continent, there are important factors worth considering and among them include, military coup d'état, liberation movements and dwindling participation at the polls. Since 2020 there are about 9 coup d'état that have taken place in Africa. The role of liberation movements on the African continent and their continued alliances remain another important factor. How many of these once glorious liberation movements have succeeded beyond ushering political liberations into real economic development and improvement of their citizenry lives? Then there are neo-colonial states whose populace are dejected and see periodic elections to be irrelevant to their livelihoods. While elections on the continent are continued to be held regularly, they are often marred by serious allegations of corruptions and lack of accountability.

- Political participation
- Election campaigns and artificial intelligence
- Voter education
- Election observer missions
- Post electoral period
- Neo-colonial posture and the emergence of dictators
- Liberation movements and elections
- Evolution of democratic elections in Africa
- Electoral reforms
- Women and youth

ABSTRACTS AND PUBLICATION

An invitation is extended to interested participants, public servants, practitioners, policy makers, intellectuals and academics to submit abstracts of 200-300 words on any of the specific themes stated above. This needs to include a short biography of not more than 250 words.

Abstracts should be sent to the following email address: PAESummit@iems.co.za

Possible publication

The conference organisers intend to produce a minimum of two DHET accredited publications dependent on the number of submissions that meet the blind peer review quality processes in the form of a special issue of a journal and also an edited book. Communication will be made with authors of selected papers before and after the conference.

- Abstract Submission Deadline Date 29th February 2024
- Notification of Acceptance 8th March 2024
- Conference Registration (Early Birds) 30 March 2024 – R6,500.00 (US\$350)
- Conference Registration 1 April – 9 May, 2024 - R7,500.00 (US\$400)