



SUMMIT ON THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA

CO-CONVENERS: OLUSEGUN OBASANJO PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY
SHEHU MUSA YAR'ADUA FOUNDATION

Introduction

As Africa grapples with the dual forces of challenge and promise in its democratic journey, the continent stands at a crossroads. Despite significant strides towards democratic governance, a troubling resurgence of military coups casts a long shadow, threatening the progress made. As we approach Africa Day on May 25, 2024, a day that commemorates the founding of the Organisation of African Unity (now the African Union), it is imperative to reflect on the continent's journey towards democracy. Africa Day symbolises the collective spirit and aspirations of the African people for unity, freedom, and self-determination.

Against this backdrop, the Summit on the State of Democracy in Africa, scheduled for May 22, 2024, at the Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Centre, seeks to foster a dialogue that not only addresses the challenges but underscores the importance of continental solutions, especially in the face of increasing external influences. Amidst the backdrop of Western, Russian and Chinese interests, this Summit will facilitate a candid conversation among African leaders about the state of democracy on the continent to provide solutions to arrest the trend of democratic backsliding.

This gathering is not only timely but also a testament to the enduring spirit of Africa Day, as it seeks to foster a dialogue that addresses the challenges of democracy while underscoring the importance of continental solutions.

The Ford Foundation is the sponsoring organisation, represented by President Darren Walker.

Background and Rationale

Triumphs and setbacks have marked Africa's journey towards democracy. The continent has witnessed numerous military coups over the years, with periods of democratic governance often interspersed with authoritarian rule. However, the turn of the century saw a renewed commitment to democratic values, with many countries transitioning to civilian government and holding regular elections.

Yet, recent events have cast a shadow over this democratic progress. Countries including Gabon, Mali, Guinea, Congo, Burkina Faso, and Niger have experienced coups, raising concerns about the fragility of African democratic institutions.

As we celebrate Africa Day, we are reminded of the continent's aspirations for democratic governance, which have been challenged by this resurgence of military coups, casting a shadow over its democratic progress. This oscillation between democratic advancements and setbacks mirrors the complex journey towards the fulfilment of the principles celebrated on Africa Day.

Afrobarometer surveys reveal a nuanced picture of citizen sentiment. While a general preference for democracy persists, there is growing disillusionment with its practice. Corruption, unmet socio-economic needs, and perceived governmental inefficiency have eroded public trust. In some cases, this has led to passive acceptance or even support for military interventions.

Coupled with these internal challenges, Africa also faces external pressure from Western, Russian and Chinese interests, which often come with their agendas. External partnerships can offer valuable resources and support, but they can also be disruptive and, in some cases, counter-progressive. It is imperative for African nations to prioritise and champion solutions tailored to the unique socio-political and cultural context of the continent.

Co-convened by the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library and the Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation, the Summit provides an opportune platform for leaders and stakeholders to engage in meaningful dialogue on the challenges facing democratic governance in Africa. It encourages a collaborative exploration of solutions to strengthen democracy's foundations, echoing the spirit of Africa Day. This event is not just a conference; it is a reaffirmation of Africa's commitment to the principles of unity, freedom, and democracy, as celebrated on Africa Day, making it a critical juncture for the continent's future.

Event Objectives

1. Assess the current state of democracy in Africa, highlighting both achievements and areas of concern.
2. Discuss the implications of recent military coups on the democratic fabric of the continent.
3. Engage in a dialogue on alternative democratic models that align with Africa's historical and cultural landscape.
4. Promote intercontinental collaboration to evolve and adopt sustainable, people-focused governance systems.

Key Topics for Exploration

- The evolving landscape of democracy in Africa: Achievements, challenges, and prospects.
- The role of leadership in shaping democratic outcomes.
- The compatibility of Western liberal democracy with African historic and cultural nuances.
- Citizen sentiment and perceptions of democracy: Insights from Afrobarometer surveys.
- Strategies for strengthening democratic resilience in the face of external and internal threats.

Event Structure and Activities

Opening Session (2 hours):

Welcome and Introduction: Abubakar B. Mahmoud, Board Member, Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation, will offer an overview of the Summit Objectives and Agenda

Presentation

- Professor E. Gyimah Boadi, Afrobarometer
- Topic: " Citizen Sentiments and Aspirations Towards Democracy in Africa"

Special Remarks

- Darren Walker, Ford Foundation President
- Topic: " Civic Engagement and Participation as a Pillar for Strengthening Democracy"

Special Guests of Honour

- Amina Mohammed, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General
- Topic: "Global Perspectives on Democracy in Africa"

- H. E. Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of Tanzania
- Topic: "Africa Day: The Continent's Aspiration for Participatory Governance"

Keynote Address

- H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR
- Topic: "Rethinking Democracy in Africa: Beyond the Western Liberal Model"

Lunch Break (45 mins)

Panel Discussion - *Charting the Future of Democracy in Africa* (1 hour):

Discussants offer analysis, critique, and insights on the presentations and remarks. Discussants may engage in a dynamic exchange of ideas and viewpoints. This interaction can lead to a deeper exploration of the topic and the generation of new insights.

Discussants:

- Dr. Leena Hoffmann-Atar, Chatham House, Africa Programme
- Prof Pape Chérif BASSÈNE, Université Cheikh Anta Diop
- Professor E. Gyimah Boadi, Afrobarometer
- Dr. Yousra Hamdaoui, Université Hassan II Mohammedia

Moderator:

Prof. Peter Okebukola, Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library

Book Presentation

- *Presenter: Prof. Ichoku Hyacinth*
- *Topic: "Meta-Theory for Contemporary African Change and Development"*

Closing Remarks:

- Dr. Chichi Aniagolu-Okoye, Regional Director, Ford Foundation West Africa

Target Audience

The Summit will engage a diverse audience, including policymakers, academics, civil society leaders, youth representatives, and the public interested in the democratic trajectory of Africa.

Expected Outcomes

1. Enhanced understanding of the current state of democracy in Africa.
2. Strengthened collaboration among African nations to promote democratic governance.

3. Actionable strategies to address challenges facing democracy and good governance on the continent.

Proposed Date

The proposed date for this summit is Wednesday, May 22, 2023, at the Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Centre.