

**Abdalla Hamdok, Director NRID, UNECA**

**Governance, Conflict, Peace and Security  
ADF VI**

**1. The context**

**Global and Regional Issues in Democracy Building: Perspective on Recent Trends:**

- The enormous challenges involved in rebuilding functioning states from above and outside, as in Afghanistan and Iraq, have absorbed much of the energy and resources of the international community, but have also alerted public opinion as never before to the complexities of building democracy
- Problems of security, legitimacy, local ownership, the interplay of cultural, religious and democratic values.
- The importance of the “process” of decision making as well as design of political institutions, and the need for a very long term perspective.
- The approaches to democracy building and conflict management advocated by International institutions are based on extensive dialogue and consensus building with local stakeholders
- It draws on comparative experience in other situations have proved to be very relevant.
- Also the democratic governance must be seen to have an instrumentalist value and relevance to improving human development in order for stakeholders to buy-into the culture of democracy.
- But a caveat is necessary here. It is that, while the core tenets of democratic governance have universal validity, the democracy a nation chooses to develop depends on its history and circumstances- countries will necessarily be “differently democratic”. Democracy that empowers people must be built- it cannot be imported”. When democracy travels, in the process it must be seen and acknowledged as a two way process.
- The need for experimentation a nation has to rise and fall in the process; you can not learn democracy without practicing it.

**The African Diversity:**

- Africa with all its problems of poverty, debt, HIV-Aids, armed conflict etc, it has managed against great odds to move forward in many respects in the last few years.
- Despite continuing imperfections in elections and corruption, there appears to be a strong popular demand for more and better democracy.

- The establishment of the African Union, and particularly the NEPAD initiative, has focussed the minds of political elites on the business of responsible economic and political governance and a new sense of collective responsibility is developing.
- In the continent the pattern that is emerging is that, an overwhelming number of countries have and are transforming their regime types from the authoritarian variant to a more pluralistic type; with constitutionally guaranteed provisions for periodic elections and commitment to civil and political liberties, effective transfer of power and renewal of leadership.
- In addition, transparent electoral processes and a more inclusive political system in which minorities and previously disadvantaged groups have gained access to elected and appointed offices.
- The more inclusive the political space becomes, the more the likelihood of sustaining the gains made in democratic governance.
- The issue of deepening democracy remains a serious concern, given the socio-political challenges facing the continent.
- It is noteworthy that certain states have thus far shown some remarkable resiliency, such as: Ghana, Benin, Botswana, Namibia, and Senegal in the face of these challenges.
- The unevenness in the level and depth of democratic governance across countries may be in part due somewhat, to the intractable nature of democracy challenges in the respective countries.
- The expectation is that the experiences of these countries may provide “demonstration effects” that could provide the forward to other states where the commitment to democratic governance may yet be tenuous and grudging.

### **The African Context: NEPAD and the Emerging Governance Agenda and the APRM**

African governments are increasingly acknowledging the need for democratic governance and have made the latter a central focal point of their NEPAD initiative. NEPAD represents a culmination of Africa’s commitment to good governance. Although all other initiatives on governance have helped to accent the importance of governance to Africa’s development agenda, none has had the level of impact on governance as NEPAD. This partnership has several unique features, but the most important and relevant to progress towards good governance in Africa are:

- the recognition that economic/corporate, political governance, peace and security are necessary preconditions for Africa’s development strategy;
- the pledge by African leaders to be accountable to one another and to their own people;

- the emphasis on Africa's ownership of the development process;
- The setting up of programmatic agenda and processes that have led to a peer review mechanism for monitoring compliance to the goals and objectives of the initiative; and
- The demonstration of the collective political will of African leaders and their commitment to mutual accountability to each other through NEPAD represents a watershed in Africa's quest for revitalization and renewal in the 21st century.

## **2. The Major Challenges to Democratic Governance**

- Democracy and good governance encompasses a range of actions aimed at creating more open, participatory societies, and promoting greater accountability and transparency in public affairs.
- In addition, there should be a strong adherence to the rule of law in a manner that protects personal and civil liberties and gender equality and ensures public safety and security with equal access to justice for all; coupled with the provision of effective and fair legal sector institutions.
- Also democratic governance cannot be sustained in an environment that is characterised by exclusive politics.

Six main challenges to democratic governance in Africa: these are:

1. weak democratic traditions and culture;
2. weak institutions;
3. weak political parties;
4. the management of conflicts related to ethnicity, identity and religion;
5. transforming the private sector to an engine of development;
6. Addressing the gender gap.

### **The Gender Gap:**

- Women around the world at every socio-political level find themselves underrepresented in parliament and far removed from decision-making processes.
- While the political playing field in each country has its own particular characteristics, one feature remains common to all: it is uneven and not conducive to women's participation.

- Women who want to enter politics find that the political, public, cultural and social environments are often unfriendly or even hostile to them.
- There are enormous efforts at international, regional and national levels to address these issues. The Programme Action adopted at Beijing is based on the recognition that the development of women is integral to the development of society and further that political and civil rights are inseparable from economic and social rights. The CEDAW signed by 165 countries emphasizes the importance of equality between men and women in public life.
- Unfortunately, the representation of Women in Lower Houses of Parliament worldwide currently stands at 18% in 2007.
- Not to mention on the other hand and in spite of all these efforts more women are living in absolute and relative poverty today than ten years ago.
- Furthermore, and despite 31 countries signing and 4 ratifying the AU Protocol on the Rights of Women in the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, challenges remain.  
**(Design for Equality; Quota Systems; Coalition Building and the role of leadership; Women in Parliaments).**

### **3. Conflict, Peace and Security**

- There has been progress in considering a gender perspective in international thinking, policy statements and programmes related to peace-building and post conflict reconstruction.
- There are indications of slow but positive shift in international opinion and understanding about the consequences of conflict on women and the importance of their participation in peace-building processes and post conflict social transformation.
- However, gender discrimination continues: political exclusion, economic marginalization and sexual violence during and after conflicts denying women their human rights and constraining the potential for development.
- Women individually and collectively contribute to peace building in many ways. Yet, their contributions are often overlooked because they take unconventional forms, occur outside formal peace processes or are considered extension of women existing gender roles.
- Sustainable peace requires a more permanent transformation of social norms around violence, gender and power.
- The portrayal of women as victims not only neglect the significant roles women have played in conflicts and post conflicts but also undermines their future potential as key participants in formal peace processes.
- Therefore, the ability of international peace building to incorporate a gender perspective takes on greater significant.

- The year 2000 marked a turning point in international policy addressing gender and conflict and peace building with the UN Security Council adoption of resolution 1325 concerning women, peace and security.
- While gender mainstreaming seeks to eliminate gender based discriminations in policies and programs, initial evidence indicate that many of the peace building and reconstruction institutional frameworks and their implementation continue to fail to address underlining gender roles and associated power dynamics that lay the basis for institutionalized gender discrimination.
- Consequently a framework of peace building and reconstruction must address socially entrenched gender based discrimination.
- Efforts to introduce gender sensitive approach to peace building have met with limited results because they fail to address underlining norms that define gender relations and power dynamics.
- Current gaps in knowledge suggest the needs for further analysis to understand the complex interplay among gender identity, power, and violence, and therefore, there is a need to:
  - ✓ Establish methods of monitoring and evaluation that assess and guide gender perspective in peace building initiatives;
  - ✓ Document norms and institutional practice that influence women economic integration; and
  - ✓ Determine optimal strategies to promote the human right of women in reconstruction and conflict prevention.

Thank you.