



STATE OF DEMOCRACY *in* AFRICA

SUMMIT REPORT

Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation
MAY 22, 2024



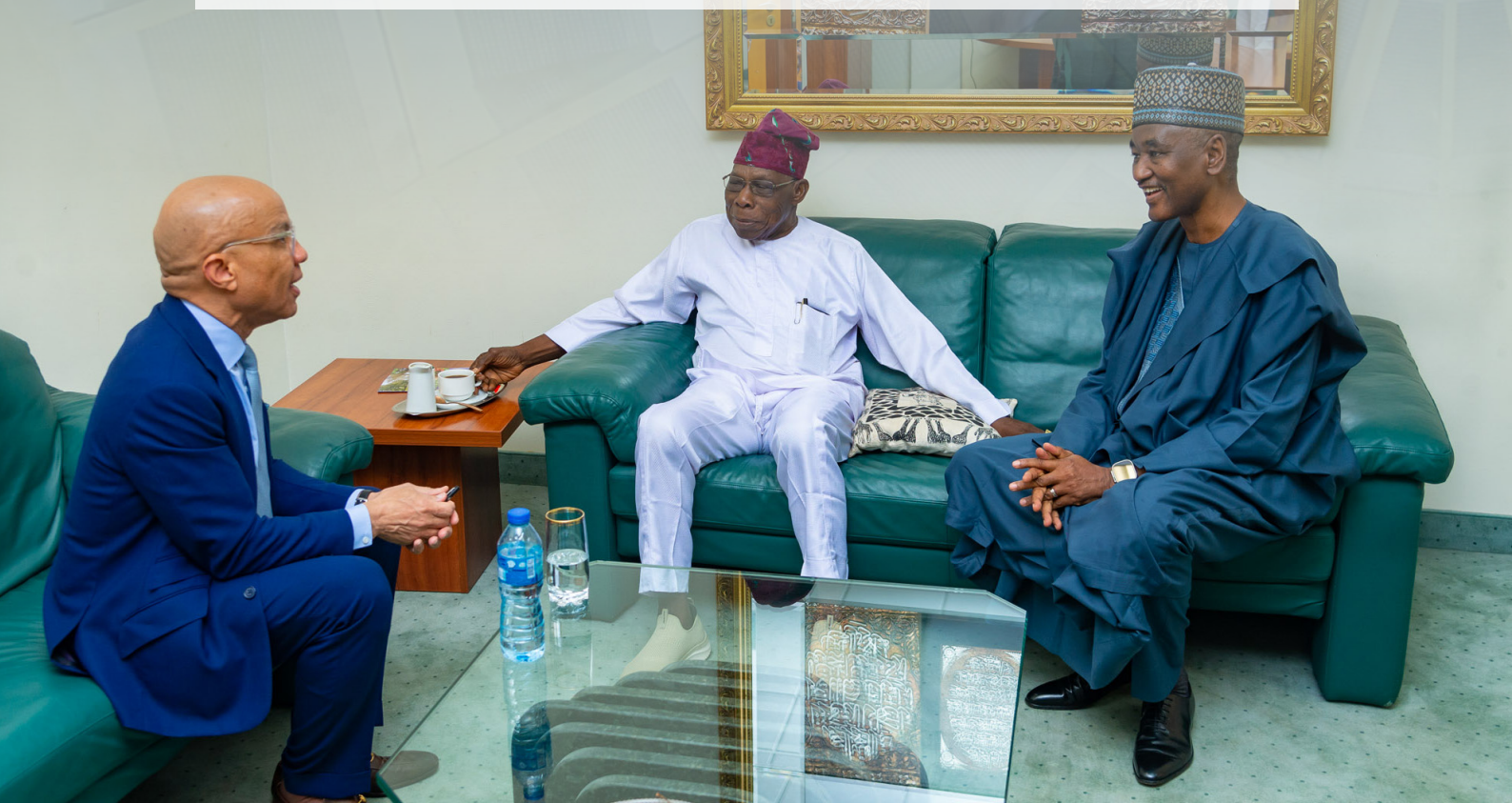
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Africa grapples with the duality of challenge and promise. Despite significant strides towards democratic governance, a troubling resurgence of military coups casts a dark shadow, threatening progress.

Afrobarometer public attitude 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. This has sometimes led to passive acceptance or even support for military interventions. Africa Day, May 25, 2024, commemorated the founding of the Organisation of African Unity (now African Union), presenting an opportunity to reflect on the continent's journey towards democracy.

Co-convened with the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library and with support from Ford Foundation and Trust Africa, the Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation hosted *The Summit on The State of Democracy in Africa* to illuminate strides made towards democratic governance and interrogate the resurgence of military coups that threaten our progress. This pivotal gathering emphasized the imperative for continental solutions amid mounting external pressures, reinventing a shared spirit for unity, freedom, and self-determination.

The Summit explored democratic models that resonate with Africa's historical and cultural context and discussed possibilities for cross-continental cooperation to refine and embrace sustainable, citizen-centric governance frameworks. Civil society actors, government officials, academics, students and the public received presentations from leaders and experts including H.E. Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, represented by Vice President, H.E. Kashim Shettima, GCON; H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR, Ms. Amina Mohammed, GCON; Abubakar Balarabe Mahmoud, SAN, Mr. Darren Walker, Dr. Ebrima Sall and Dr. Chichi Aniagolu-Okoye.

The panel session, *Charting the Future of Democracy in Africa*, brought together a distinguished ensemble of scholars, policymakers, and civil society leaders to delve into the complexities of democracy in Africa—its triumphs, trials, and the path forward.

The second session, *Voices of Tomorrow: The State of Democracy in Africa*, convened young African leaders who shared inventive initiatives in their respective countries as they work to reshape the future of democratic governance in Africa.

The Summit concluded with a consensus on the importance of reinforcing democratic values and institutions in Africa. Speakers and participants emphasized the need for inclusive governance that reflects the diversity of African societies and addresses the aspirations of all citizens, including marginalized groups such as women, children, and persons with disabilities.

INTRODUCTION

The Summit provided an important platform for leaders and stakeholders, including youth, to engage in meaningful dialogue regarding challenges facing democratic governance on the continent. The event encouraged a collaborative exploration of solutions to strengthen democracy's foundations, echoing the spirit of Africa Day. The Summit served as a reaffirmation of Africa's commitment to the principles of unity, freedom, and democracy, as celebrated on Africa Day.

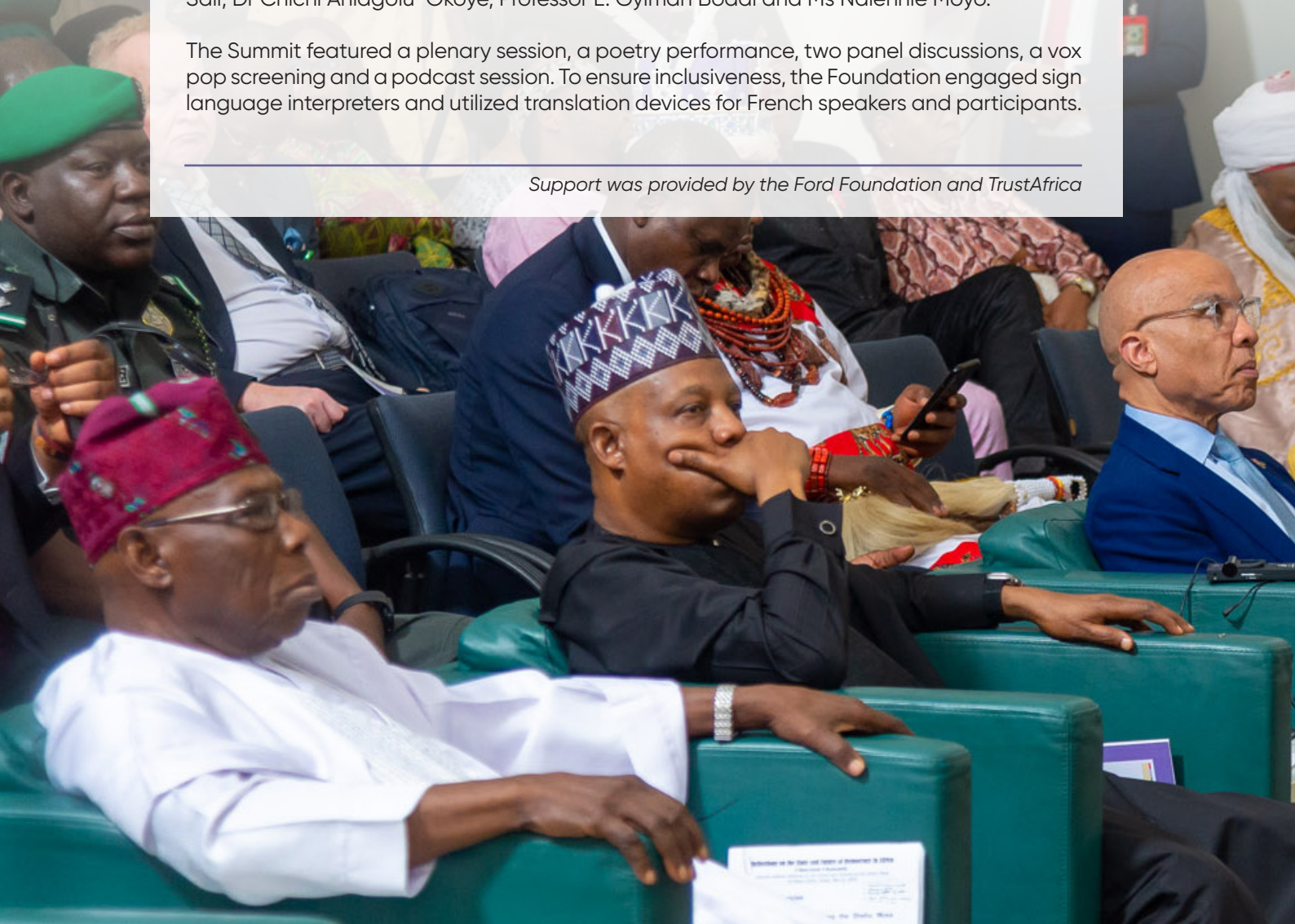
Summit Objectives

- Illuminate pathways for strengthening democratic governance and resilience across the continent.
- Provide a platform for young leaders to discuss the state of democracy in Africa from their unique perspectives.
- Explore the specific challenges and opportunities faced by African youth in the democratic process.
- Identify innovative approaches to strengthen democratic institutions and practices in Africa.

The Summit was attended by over 415 participants (50% women and 50% men) from Nigeria, Ghana, Luxembourg, Morocco, Senegal, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Civil society actors, academics, students and the public, including persons with disabilities, received presentations from leaders and experts, including H.E. Bola Ahmed Tinubu, *GCFR*, ably represented by Vice President, H.E. Kashim Shettima, *GCN*; H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo, *GCFR*, Ms Amina Mohammed, *GCN*; Abubakar Balarabe Mahmoud, *SAN*, Mr Darren Walker, Dr Ebrima Sall, Dr Chichi Aniagolu-Okoye, Professor E. Gyimah Boadi and Ms Nalenhle Moyo.

The Summit featured a plenary session, a poetry performance, two panel discussions, a vox pop screening and a podcast session. To ensure inclusiveness, the Foundation engaged sign language interpreters and utilized translation devices for French speakers and participants.

Support was provided by the Ford Foundation and TrustAfrica



BACKGROUND

The *Summit on the State of Democracy in Africa* was convened against a backdrop of significant progress and troubling setbacks in the continent's journey towards democratic governance. Over the years, Africa has seen numerous military coups and periods of authoritarian rule interspersed with attempts to establish and maintain democratic institutions. The turn of the century marked a renewed commitment to democratic values, with many African nations transitioning to civilian governments and holding regular elections.

Recent events, however, have threatened these democratic gains. Several African countries, including Gabon, Mali, Guinea, Congo, Burkina Faso, and Niger, have experienced coups, raising concerns about the fragility of democratic institutions. This resurgence of military interventions underscores the ongoing struggle to establish stable and resilient democratic governance in Africa.

The Yar'Adua Foundation, in partnership with the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library and with support from the Ford Foundation and Trust Africa, co-convened the Summit to address these pressing issues. The gathering was designed to illuminate the strides made towards democratic governance while critically examining the resurgence of military coups that pose a significant threat to this progress. The Summit emphasized the need for continental solutions in the face of mounting external pressures and sought to reinvigorate the shared spirit and ambitions of African people for unity, freedom, and self-determination.

Afrobarometer surveys have shown that while there is a general preference for democracy among African citizens, growing disillusionment with its practice due to corruption, unmet socio-economic needs, and perceived governmental inefficiency has eroded public trust. This disillusionment has sometimes led to passive acceptance or even support for military interventions.

Discussions highlighted the necessity for cross-continental cooperation to refine and embrace sustainable, citizen-centric governance frameworks that resonate with Africa's historical and cultural context.



WELCOME REMARKS

Abubakar B. Mahmoud, SAN

Member, Board Directors

Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation



Yar'Adua's commitment to unity, effective governance, and democratic values is inspiring and forms the fundamental basis of the Foundation's mission and vision.

Abubakar Mahmoud, SAN, praised the Yar'Adua Foundation's collaboration with the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library to convene the Summit. He emphasized their commitment to promoting national unity, good governance, justice, and democracy in Nigeria and across the continent, built upon the legacies of two prominent leaders.

Mahmoud stated that the Summit's theme is timely given the significant challenges facing democracy in Africa, including the inability to conduct credible elections, promote inclusiveness, and achieve prosperity and stability on the continent. He pointed to troubling trends such as military coups and takeovers in various African countries, while commending Nigeria for maintaining uninterrupted civil democratic rule for over two decades. However, he raised the question of whether democracy has delivered the prosperity and transformation that people seek. He reminded participants of a significant statement by Amilcar Cabral made in 1965 during Africa's anti-colonial struggles:

"Always remember that the people are not fighting for ideas, nor what is in men's minds. The people fight and accept the sacrifices demanded by the struggle in order to gain material advantages, to live better and in peace, to benefit from progress, and for the better future of their children. National liberation, the struggle against colonialism, the construction of peace, and independence are hollow words devoid of any significance unless they can be translated into a real improvement of living conditions".

He praised Olusegun Obasanjo as a remarkable advocate and strong supporter of Africa's democratic progress. He stated that the initiative strongly aligns with the principles upheld by Shehu Musa Yar'Adua. Yar'Adua's commitment to unity, effective governance, and democratic values is inspiring and forms the fundamental basis of the Foundation's mission and vision.

In conclusion, Mahmoud urged participants to challenge existing models of liberal democracy and seek models that are more in tune with Africa's historical and cultural context. He emphasized the importance of considering ongoing globalization trends, such as technological advancements, the climate crisis, and the shift towards renewable energy, while addressing governance and institutional challenges in Africa.



PRESENTATIONS



Nalenhle Moyo
Arts4Change
Magamba Network

Nalenhle explained that “Magamba” means “heroes”. She stated that the network empowers young people to advocate for a just, participatory, and green Africa using arts, digital media,

civic tech, and activism. The Magamba network, based in Harare, Zimbabwe, has been a leader in digital media, activism, and innovation for 16 years. It has supported over 200 artists in Zimbabwe and shared its expertise with other African countries. For example, it supported the #DeathLawDigital campaign in Zambia, leading to the abolition of the law by President Hakainde Hichilema in December 2022. The network has an online community of over 400,000 individuals and reaches 10 million youth annually. In conclusion, Nalenhle stressed that the Magamba Network aims to inspire young people to strive for a fair, participatory, and green Africa and encouraged participants to pay close attention to the Summit, especially the youth panel session.



Professor E. Gyimah Boadi
Co-Founder
Afrobarometer

Professor Boadi extended his warm greetings on behalf of Afrobarometer’s board, management, staff, and extensive network of forty members spanning forty countries. He expressed his sincere appreciation to the Yar’Adua Foundation, Obasanjo Presidential Library, and other partners for the opportunity to share valuable insights which he hoped would contribute to shaping the future of democracy in Africa.

Boadi said that citizen sentiments and aspirations towards democracy in Africa encompass the collective voices of over 385,000 Africans who have engaged with Afrobarometer’s field researchers over the past two decades.

The pan-African, non-partisan survey research network offers reliable data on African perspectives and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life to empower the African public by giving them a voice in policy and decision-making processes. Since its inception in 1999, the network has successfully conducted nine survey rounds across 42 countries. The launch of the tenth round of surveys took place in January 2024.

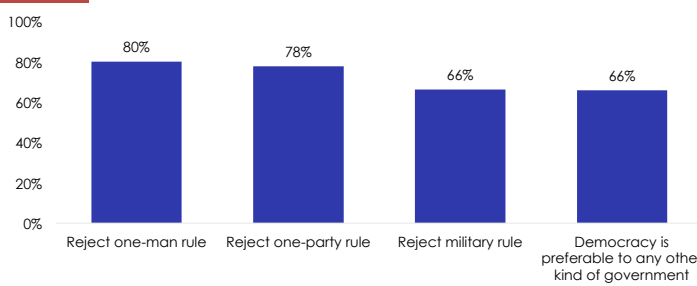
Prof. Boadi emphasized the challenging times Africa currently faces in terms of democracy. In the past year, six countries have witnessed military interventions that ousted elected governments, while several presidents have disregarded constitutional term limits to secure third terms in office. Additionally, a number of leaders have employed subtle tactics to undermine democracy, weaken checks on their authority, and harass political opposition. These setbacks have understandably led to widespread concerns about the erosion of democracy on the continent.

He presented the most recent and ninth round of nationally representative surveys conducted in 39 countries from 2021 to 2023, and the ensuing outcomes as verified by Afrobarometer. Boadi affirmed that the general populace throughout Africa yearns to be governed by democratic and responsible administrations. These aspirations have predominantly endured over time, despite aspects of the data indicating potential risks.

Presentation Highlights

- Citizens across the continent have consistently expressed their pro-democracy sentiments, taking into consideration their opposition to military rule.
- The deficiency and delayed implementation of democracy and accountable governance, in relation to the people's desires, contribute to a decline in trust in democracy.
- The state of African democratic governance appears bleak from the supply side.
- Leaders and governments have consistently fallen short of meeting citizen expectations. This situation has worsened over time, particularly concerning fair elections, government integrity, and adherence to the rule of law.
- African policy advocates must prioritize strategies to enhance the implementation of democracy and accountable governance. This is crucial for instilling a deeper faith in democracy among the people.

Support for democracy and rejection of authoritarian rule | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked:

Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion? Statement 1: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.

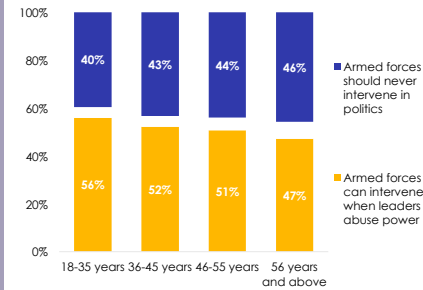
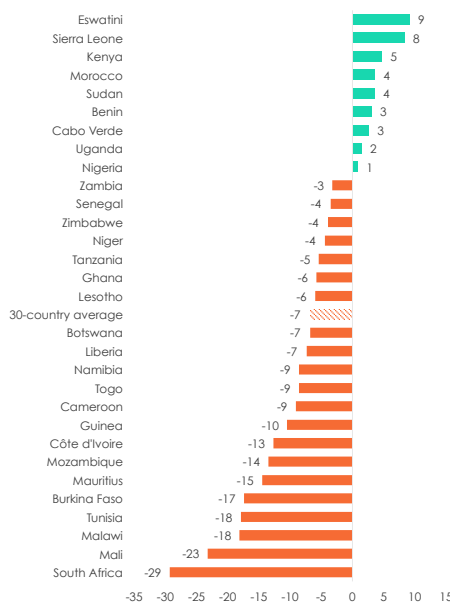
Statement 2: In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable. Statement 3: For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have. (% who say democracy is preferable)

There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives: Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office? The army comes in to govern the country? Elections and Parliament are abolished so that the president can decide everything? (% who "disagree" or "strongly disagree")



Changes in preference for democracy (percentage points) | 30 countries | 2011-2023

Figure shows changes (in percentage points) of the proportion between 2011/2013 and 2021/2023 who say "democracy is preferable to any other kind of government."



Changes in satisfaction with democracy (percentage points) | 30 countries | 2011-2023

Figure shows changes (in percentage points) of the proportion between 2011/2013 and 2021/2023 who say they are "fairly satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the way democracy works in the country



Should military intervene when elected leaders abuse power?

| by age | 39 countries
| 2021/2023

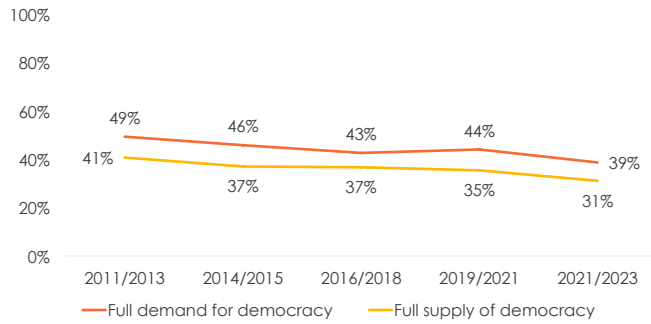
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
Statement 1: [Country]'s armed forces should never intervene in the country's political process.

Statement 2: It is legitimate for the armed forces to take control of government when elected leaders abuse power for their own ends.

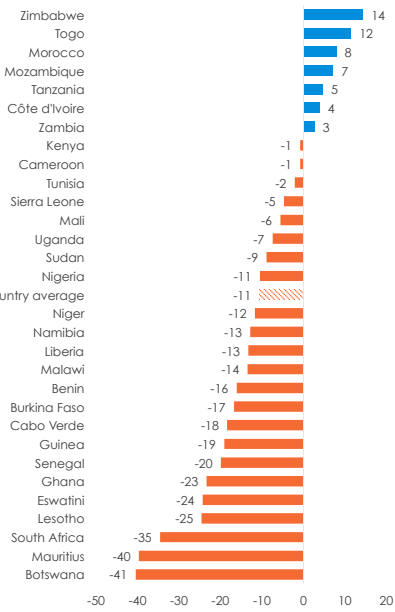
(% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement)

Demand for democracy and the supply deficit

| 29* countries | 2011-2023

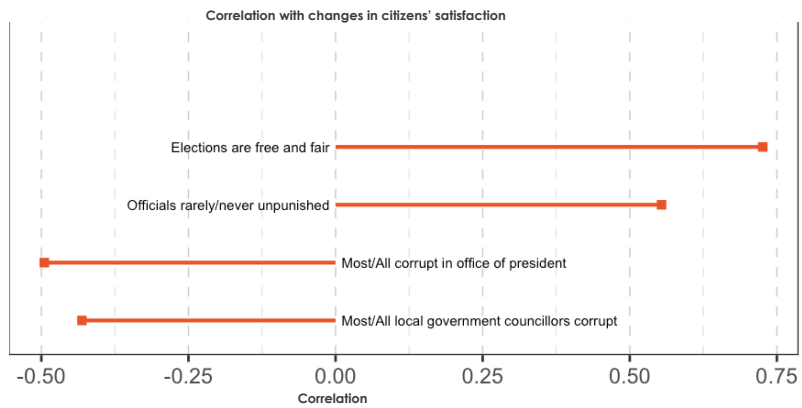


Full demand for democracy: % who prefer democracy and reject all authoritarian alternatives
Full supply of democracy: % who describe their country as a "full democracy" or a "democracy with minor problems" and are "fairly satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the way democracy works
* Does not include Eswatini



Drivers of change in democratic satisfaction

| 30 countries | 2011-2023



In conclusion, Boadi stated that Africans have been consistent in their desire for democratic and accountable governance. He suggested that the African democracy problem is largely supply-side, adding that democratic governance delivery has tended to lag expectations. He indicated that this lagging delivery drives declines in popular faith in democracy and creates a gap into which soldiers and other adventurers march.

REFLECTIONS



Dr. Ebrima Sall
Executive Director
TrustAfrica

Dr. Sall, speaking on behalf of Trust Africa's board and staff, stated that the organization is a Pan-African Foundation dedicated to supporting democratic governance and equitable development across the African continent. The organization's focus is on responsible citizenship and accountable leadership in the search for solutions to the pressing problems facing the continent.

Dr. Sall reminded participants that Trust Africa is headquartered in Dakar, Senegal, a country where the new government, led by one of Africa's youngest presidents, was elected with the promise of bringing about systemic change. He suggested, however, that challenges facing Senegal are not related to democracy itself, but rather the complex set of factors, processes, and mechanisms that hinder the proper functioning of democracy.

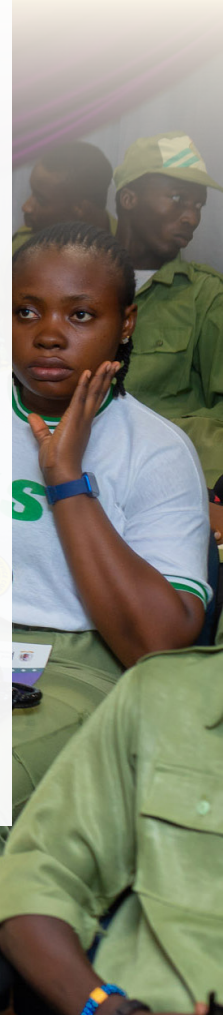
He highlighted areas that require careful consideration:

- Africa is characterized by demographic majorities of youth and women. Young people make up approximately two-thirds of almost every African population, while women are the majority in most cases. Yet these populations remain political minorities, with limited influence on decision-making. Although there has been some progress, representation of women in the judiciary has been declining since implementation of Agenda 2063. This raises a significant concern.
- Specific categories of individuals are often overlooked, including those who face discrimination based on dissent or the nature of their work. This includes people of slave origin, individuals with different orientations, and persons with disabilities. There is a pressing need to deepen democratic governance and ensure its meaningfulness for all.

Sall added that Africa is facing multiple crises at both the country and continental level, which greatly hinders the effectiveness of democracy. He added that this perception arises from the inability of democracy to deliver on its promises of political and economic progress.

He stressed the crucial need to understand the appeal for systemic change and why military groups are gaining popularity among young people in certain countries. He suggested this attraction is primarily due to unfavorable living conditions experienced in these countries and said the imperative to tackle these economic issues lies at the core of Africa's democratic systems. To address these challenges, he said it is necessary to reimagine and reinvent governance across all regions, considering the significant presence of young people, engaging with them in their own language, understanding their perspectives, and valuing their opinions. Similarly, the voices and perspectives of women must also be taken seriously.

In conclusion, Sall suggested reimagining governance systems and added that it is essential to address the role of regional organizations in this context. He noted that ECOWAS and the African Union have faced significant challenges, necessitating innovative approaches to ensure the re-engagement of countries that may be tempted to seek alternatives. He emphasized that the unity of this continent and the implementation of Agenda 2063, or at least the vision it embodies, hold the key to its salvation and future.



POETRY PERFORMANCE

Our democracy is practised at the grassroots, where too many times, a vote is exchanged for soup and rice.

So, what is the true cost to our society for this compromise? It is this. These broken roads that keep killing us. Our brothers, these men that keep raiding and taking our sisters.

No lights to operate on. So, children born dead. The rich growing richer, but graduates can't read. It is these broken taps, so we drink from the river.

No drugs to save babies from the scourge of malaria. Earning a wage that can't support a life. Yet we'll snatch ballot boxes to support a thief.

Just because he comes from our town. Reads the same bible or shares our iman. Just because he hails from the same ethnic group will endure years without any reasonable job.

Just hanging at the gates of their three storey mansions. Content with handouts and these rickety taxis. While the money that could be sinking foundations is funding the walls of our ethnic champions.

All fighting for government to represent our diversity. When the one thing we share is these bonds of poverty. So, my friends, for whatever it's worth. Permit me to share an original thought.

If you represent justice, you represent me. Whether you're Kagoro or Fulani. If our kids go to school and those schools have teachers. If you see public office as a chance to lead us.

If the lights come on and your building bridge is not funding your campaign with people's salaries. But fighting erosion, desertification, rolling out roads to unite this nation.

If you're tearing down walls to lift up this country, come from wherever. You represent me. If the tears of our children will not let you rest. When the floods take our harvest, and the roads take our best.

And the fact that we struggle to find food to eat makes you feel guilty still flying first class. Then Christian or not, if you're fighting for freedom. For the rights of each person to be treated the same.

Regardless of faith or ethnicity. If you stand up for these things. If our leaders stand up for these things. And there is hope for democracy in Africa.

Because this is the dream. To cast aside the shame of this dysfunction and poverty. And stand shoulder to shoulder with the rest of humanity. This continent is the mother of mankind.

How come we are the ones that are now left behind? With all this gold and diamonds under our feet. And the Atlantic and Indian oceans lapping at our shores. With fish in our rivers and meat in our bushes.

How come it's our children that are always the ones starving? To be thirsty in a land of rivers. To be homeless in a land of rock and timber.



Dike Chukwumerije
Spoken Word Artist

To be so divided on the oldest of all continents. Where man has lived for the longest period of time. See, if there is any secret to peaceful coexistence it should be buried here.

If there is any secret to tolerance and empathy it should be buried here. Because we have lived here since the dawn of time. These borders and boundaries are contemporary things. The African.

Is older than African countries. The African. Is older than African tribes. The African is older than African languages. We must remember this.

The songs our mothers sang to put us to sleep. The stories they told to wake our consciences up. The way our rivers meet to teach us this lesson.

That when we join hands together, we are not easily broken. But where there is no wisdom to cross this etched line. Where there is no faith to look deep inside.

And stop judging accents and sunlings and dressing. This fire we are quenching. This democracy we are building will only keep falling. For what nation can stand dividing its people?

How can one build on foundation so brittle? If we cannot see ourselves in each other this journey ends here. We are going no further. For when God made man, he gave him no facial marks.

He did not make bagi, oku, or angas. As sure as a black man is just like a white man. No culture is older than being human. This bigotry.

This unwillingness to recognize the humanity of each other. This habit of manipulating ethno-regional differences for narrow political ends. This culture of voting for tribe and religion.

Instead of for food and our children's education. This is the mental slavery Bob Marley spoke of. From which we must. If democracy is going to flourish in Africa.

From which we must emancipate ourselves.

SPECIAL REMARKS



Mr. Darren Walker
President
Ford Foundation

Mr. Walker observed that as Africans reflect on the history and future of democracy and reaffirm commitments to government by the people, for the people, it is crucial to note that it is the people who must lead the way.

He shared that for over six decades, the Ford Foundation has supported change-makers in West Africa, especially those who are too often far removed from power. He cited that throughout the history of the African continent, it is the ordinary people who have the extraordinary potential to hold leaders and institutions accountable.

Mr. Walker advised that the closed fists of military rule cannot compete with the open hands of democratic movements, which are fueled by democratic principles. He stated that those who are nearest to the issues are also the ones closest to the answer and added that the people of West Africa paint a clear picture of a gathering crisis where strong men and authoritarian governments are gaining power. Civilian rulers, civil society leaders, and human rights advocates are too often silenced as they sound the alarm and women, minority groups, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ Africans, and other vulnerable communities face threats to their rights and their very existence.

He decried the Afrobarometer research revealing that most young people are so disillusioned and so cynical that they are now willing to endorse military intervention if democratically elected leaders fail to deliver on their promises. He stressed that these are alarming developments, but suggested that within these threats lie the seeds of democracy's salvation. He noted that as ever, the people who are holding leaders and institutions accountable demand that they model transparency and build civic trust. Walker expressed optimism that the rising generation, born of instability and disenchanted with democratic processes, refuses to accept the status quo and is building a brighter, democratic future for all.

Mr. Walker stated that authoritarianism and inequality are inextricably intertwined and that each fuels the other, adding that without food, without jobs, without hope, autocracy festers. He explained that the reverse is true as well, adding that full, peaceful, participatory democracy is the great equalizer as it creates more prosperity for more people and empowers them to create a society that is more inclusive and more just.

He urged Africans to unite and take decisive action in backing democracy on the continent. He called for them to persist in opting for hope in their tomorrow rather than dwelling on the anxieties of their history, keeping in mind the dreams of the founding fathers of the African Union. He affirmed that the Ford Foundation is privileged to assist in these critical endeavors, in Nigeria and throughout West Africa.



GOODWILL MESSAGE



Ms. Amina Mohammed, GCON
Deputy Secretary-General
United Nations

Ms. Mohammed expressed her joy to participate in the Summit during a time of significant global unrest. She noted that the world is currently experiencing major changes in global trade, weakening traditional alliances, concerning polarization, ongoing wars, and the undeniable impacts of climate change. She explained that these factors, along with increasing inequalities, violent conflicts, and severe economic challenges, are reshaping the landscape of democracy in Africa.

Ms. Mohammed stated that despite this, the majority of Africans still support democratic governance and are active advocates. She cited recent data indicating a notable rise in voter turnout rates across Africa, reflecting people's desire to have a say in their futures. However, there has been a rise in distrust towards democratic institutions in 2023, with many individuals questioning their ability to address their needs and rights. The spread of misinformation and hate speech further complicates matters, distorting public opinion and undermining trust.

She stressed that it is crucial that we not disappoint our people and mentioned that achieving the African Union's vision of the desired Africa necessitates a stronger focus on the objectives of SDG Goal 16. This requires immediate and strategic investments in governance institutions that uphold the rule of law and foster trust, especially among young women and youth. The representation of women in African institutions is on the rise, with the percentage of women in African parliaments increasing from 21% in 2013 to 35% in 2023.

Ms. Mohammed urged unity in amplifying voices and denouncing all types of political violence that women in politics are subjected to. She cited that by 2030, 40% of the global population will be young individuals, stating it is therefore essential to empower youth by creating platforms that enable their participation in political and decision-making processes at various levels.



Goodwill Message cont'd.

She added that maintaining a system of checks and balances between the executive, judiciary, and legislature is crucial to uphold democratic principles and emphasized that the executive should enforce laws effectively and ensure accountability; the judiciary must interpret laws impartially and independently to uphold justice; and the legislature should create fair and inclusive laws that represent all citizens. Strengthening these connections will promote a fair distribution of power, transparency, and public trust in democratic governance.

Ms. Mohammed announced that during this year's General Assembly, they will convene the Summit of the Future to revitalize multilateralism in key areas including sustainable development, digital compact, future generations, and a new peace agenda. She shared that the Summit offers a distinct chance for everyone to come together and reach an agreement on a pact that will safeguard Africa's democratic future. This renewed pact holds the potential to mend the social contract, restore trust, and instill hope. By giving priority to global solidarity and making sustained investments in Africa's democratic institutions, it will be easy to establish the groundwork for a democracy that brings prosperity, upholds human rights, fosters inclusivity, and ensures security. The recent democratic progress in Senegal, Liberia, and Zambia, along with the continued significant role played by African regional organizations, further reinforces this optimistic outlook.

Ms. Mohammed concluded that nevertheless, the challenging road ahead necessitates united efforts within African communities and countries to strengthen democratic institutions. It also calls for international support to mitigate the impact of global shocks and prevent conflicts in Africa. She underscored the imperative of collaborative efforts to invest in Africa's democratic institutions, prioritize agencies and inclusion, and implement targeted initiatives aimed at rebuilding trust.



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR

Former President

Federal Republic of Nigeria

H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo expressed his gratitude to the Yar'Adua Foundation for partnering with the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library to host the Summit.

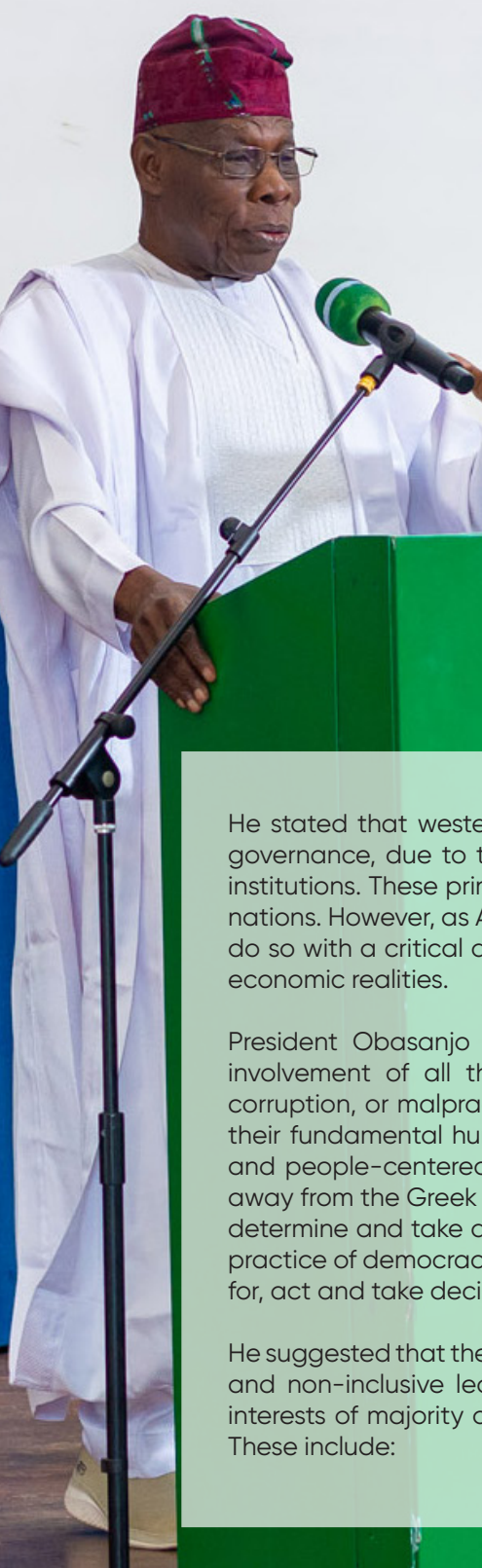
He shared that six months ago, the Africa Progress Group (APG), which he has the honor of chairing, and whose membership includes past Heads of State and Government in Africa, private sector leaders and academics from Africa and other parts of the world, convened a regional consultation on a similar subject: "Rethinking Western Liberal Democracy in Africa". He offered his personal view and the collective agreement of participants at the APG consultation:

- Democracy in the generic sense should be the preferred form of governance in Africa. The idea is not to jettison democracy but to refine its content, context, and practice.
- The practice of democracy should be contextualized to reflect rich socio-cultural history and heritage and yield dividends that will meet the aspirations of all citizens.
- To be successfully administered, any form of democracy requires at least five prerequisites to thrive in Africa; an enlightened/educated citizenry; good leadership; strong institutions, robust middle class, and socio-culturally-relevant context.

He stated that western liberal democracies have long been heralded as the gold standard of governance, due to their emphasis on individual freedoms, the rule of law, and representative institutions. These principles have undeniably contributed to the prosperity and stability of many nations. However, as Africans seek to apply these models to the African context, it is imperative to do so with a critical and discerning eye, adapting them to unique historical, cultural, and socio-economic realities.

President Obasanjo described democracy as government established by the consent and involvement of all the people with a clear mandate of the people without manipulation, corruption, or malpractices. It must serve the welfare and well-being of all the people to enjoy their fundamental human rights and all dividends of democracy. And must be simple, concise, and people-centered, people-oriented, people-managed and beneficial to all. Since moving away from the Greek practice of democracy involving all the people gathering in one location to determine and take decisions on issues pertaining to their welfare and well-being, the issue and practice of democracy has been through people's representatives – selected or elected to speak for, act and take decision for and on behalf of the people.

He suggested that the process and practice of democracy in Africa has been destabilizing, divisive, and non-inclusive leading to impunity, dictatorial tendencies and disregard of concerns and interests of majority of the people, bad governance and non-delivery of democracy dividends. These include:



Keynote Address cont'd.

- Majoritarian, maximalist, winner-take-all syndrome.
- Mismanagement of diversity especially in terms of ethnicity, religion, culture and language.
- Monetized politics which comes in the form of vote buying and bribes, rendering political power to the highest bidder and highest spender during an election.
- Pervasive poverty.
- Inherited colonial fragmented societies with artificial borders.
- Election malpractice and corruption characterised by tribalism, nepotism, and stimulated by non-independent electoral body and judiciary.
- Interference by foreign countries in electoral processes through enforcing their preferred choice of political candidates in return for doing their bidding.
- Gender bias and inequality in the African society hindering the equal participation of both genders in politics.
- Lack of character and enhancing attributes among contenders and systems administered.

He highlighted the following common elements across African cultures that promote socio-culturally-relevant democratic practice:

- The indigenous African political system has elements of communalism, participation, inclusiveness, and communal decision-making.
- The existence of a form of judicial system for addressing grievances and settling disputes.
- The indigenous African political systems made provision for impeachment of traditional rulers thereby limiting arbitrary use of power and autocratic government.
- Independent institutions which had power of impeachment when a monarch is found corrupt or governing against the will of the people.
- The presence of inbuilt mechanism of accountability and the adoption of checks and balances.
- Grassroots participation as the majority is involved in the political process.
- Dispute and grievance management systems that promote and protect peoples' rights and enhance unity.
- Impunity is normally removed through wide consultation and non-marginalization.
- Consensus is built into decision-making to ensure that all are winners and no opposition.

President Obasanjo stated that democracy is not a static phenomenon, and it is not a destination; it is a journey. It has an in-built dynamism which requires that it must be developed and consolidated. He emphasized that Africa's past and current attempts at democratic governance prove that Western liberal democracy, lock, stock, and barrel, cannot resolve Africa's governance challenge, adding that there is great need to conceptualize a democracy that adapts to Africa's historical, cultural, and current realities; a modality that works for African people. He suggested that perhaps the first step in achieving this is to prevent the privatization or capturing of the state by power elites.

...western liberal democracies have long been heralded as the gold standard of governance, due to their emphasis on individual freedoms, the rule of law, and representative institutions. These principles have undeniably contributed to the prosperity and stability of many nations. However, as Africans seek to apply these models to the African context, it is imperative to do so with a critical and discerning eye, adapting them to unique historical, cultural, and socio-economic realities.

President Obasanjo emphasized that culture plays a key role in African societies and therefore, democracy in Africa must take into cognizance the culture and worldview of the African which varies from society to society. He added that Africa's historical peculiarities and its modern realities form a strong basis for the Africanization of liberal democracy with emphasis placed on what works for Africans. He explained that for instance, Africans today are not sure whether liberal democracy places a higher premium on the majority carrying the vote or whether minority rights are also sacrosanct.

He said that in addition to the prevention of privatization of the state, there must be a separation of the business of governance from the business of economic transactions. One of the anchoring bases of this move, is the need to embrace the spirit of mutual empowerment between the state and the people.

President Obasanjo emphasized that culture plays a key role in African societies and therefore, democracy in Africa must take into cognizance the culture and worldview of the African which varies from society to society. He added that Africa's historical peculiarities and its modern realities form a strong basis for the Africanization of liberal democracy with emphasis placed on what works for Africans. He explained that for instance, Africans today are not sure whether liberal democracy places a higher premium on the majority carrying the vote or whether minority rights are also sacrosanct. Additionally, the duly elected parliament of Uganda has unanimously voted to criminalize homosexuality arguing that it is alien to African culture. Yet, proponents of liberal democracy have taken steps to punish Uganda for making such a law. He stated that this is an ideology at war with its own principles and it is time for Africans to look again and agree on what works for them.

He warned that the call for rethinking of liberal democracy in Africa should not be seen as an attack on liberal democracy. It should also not be leveraged by tyrants and autocrats to hold on to power. It is not to go back to living in the past. Instead, it is borne out of genuine concern about an ideology which Africans have not fully interrogated, internalized and owned and which is not delivering as we expected. The rethinking of liberal democracy should be focused on Africanizing a universal political system based on African realities and peculiarities. The context and the contents must be interrogated and suitably and appropriately placed to serve our purpose.

President Obasanjo urged Africans and non-Africans alike to devise a form of contextual democracy that will take account of past experiences and experiences of others in order to have a system that is sufficiently democratic, efficient, effective, makes use of the best within the community and society, leaving nobody out. He concluded by saying that the journey towards democracy in Africa is a complex and evolving one. While considering the application of Western liberal democratic models to African continent, let it be done with humility, wisdom, and an unwavering commitment to the welfare of the people. It is also important to learn from the successes and failures of others, while crafting a uniquely African path to democracy that honors our rich heritage and meets the aspirations of all citizens.

SPECIAL GUEST OF HONOUR



H.E. Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR
President
Federal Republic of Nigeria

Represented by
H.E. Kashim Shettima, GCON
Vice President
Federal Republic of Nigeria

His Excellency acknowledged General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua as a martyr of democracy, who was a soldier by vocation and a democrat by inclination. He stated that late Yar'Adua wasn't only the second-in-command in the military government that handed over to a civilian government in 1979, after which he retired and ventured into business, but returned as a full-blown democrat to fight for the enthronement of democracy. He shared that Yar'Adua bore the pain of imprisonment and paid the ultimate price, and through the work of the Yar'Adua Foundation, his memory, and the values he upheld continue to illuminate the paths of Nigerians.

President Tinubu said that democracy has proven to be the best form of government, and the recent coups and countercoups in some African countries is a reminder of the horrifying legacy of military misadventures on the continent and the sacrifices of pro-democracy forces and civil society activists who fought for the return to civilization.

He referenced 1993, when the military in Nigeria aborted the transition to democracy, which had started two years earlier with the elections of members of parliament at the state and federal levels, the elections of governors, and a free and fair presidential election on June 12 of the same year. He reminded the audience that Nigerians rose against the annulments and never stopped until another return to democracy in 1999, the fourth in Nigeria's political history. He said that today the country has recorded 25 years of unbroken democratic governance and has learned through bitter experience that the cure for bad democratic governance is more democracy.

President Tinubu remarked that the tragedies of nations and histories inspire concern about the reversals of democratic governments, particularly in West Africa. He said that is why Africans are alarmed by the military coups in Mali, Guinea Conakry, Burkina Faso, Niger Republic, and Gabon and concerned about attempted coups in Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau, an aborted coup in The Gambia and in Senegal, where a former incumbent tried to elongate his tenure by shifting the election and handover date.

He stated that this threat was the reason ECOWAS, in January 2017, took action to intervene in The Gambia, in what was called "Operation Restore Democracy, to ensure that the will of the people prevailed after a defeated incumbent refused to concede defeat. The military intervention in Gambia was in line with the 2001 ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.



President Tinubu said that democracy has proven to be the best form of government, and the recent coups and countercoups in some African countries is a reminder of the horrifying legacy of military misadventures on the continent and the sacrifices of pro-democracy forces and civil society activists who fought for the return to civilization.

As the current Chairman of the Heads of Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), His Excellency had to invoke the protocol to rally the regional authority to take necessary action to restore democracy in countries where it had been overturned. Unfortunately, they were handicapped by the possibility of a humanitarian crises that left them with the option of sanctions. Yet, ECOWAS has since lifted the sanctions imposed on the aberrant countries because it was the innocent majority of citizens who were suffering the effects. President Tinubu promised to continue to strive through persuasion, diplomacy, and the power of example to encourage military leaders in the affected countries to restore democratic governance and do everything possible to encourage those who have misguidedly announced their exit from ECOWAS to return to the fold in the best interest of their people.

He was optimistic that though there is despair about democratic reversals, most especially in West Africa, elections have successfully held in countries including Liberia, Kenya, Ghana, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Senegal, and Nigeria. South Africa will hold its general elections on May 29th. He emphasized that elections conducted by fallible mortals cannot be perfect, due to rancorously contested elections in some of the oldest and most mature democracies in the world.

He subscribed to the notion that basic standards of electoral transparency must be met because it is only through the continuous practice of democracy, through repeated elections, that such standards can be institutionalized. Those in leadership positions have the responsibility to shine the light of good, responsive, and productive governance to make democracy appealing and attractive to those parts of the continent that are still under military dictatorship.

He spoke of the defunct OAU that creditably played its role in coordinating and spearheading the liberation of the African continent from the stranglehold of imperialism. He added that the collective strength and efficacy of the AU as a continental organization can only be a function of the effectiveness and efficiency of the sub-regional organizations to which its component member states belong. He stressed the need for the Summit to accord priority to constructive discussions on how the various sub-regional groupings in Africa can integrate their economies more closely, collaborate more productively

Special Guest of Honour cont'd.

President Tinubu encouraged stakeholders present at the Summit to deliberate on ways through which African sub-regional organizations can help foster better intra-African trade, achieve food and energy security, promote higher rates of youth employment, alleviate poverty, and realize greater prosperity for Africans.

to achieve greater regional security and collectively ensure adherence to the principles of constitutional and democratic governance within their respective boundaries.

He reminded participants that the Abuja Treaty of 1991, which came into force in 1994, provides for the African Economic Community (AEC) to be fully functional by 2028 following a gradual process of regional and continental integration. Regional organizations, the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), ECOWAS, Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), must be focused and dedicated to the realization of their objectives.

He added that these sub-regional groupings must seriously pursue the formation, proper funding, and efficient administration of standby military outfits that will help contain military adventurers and the rampaging waves of terrorism and religious extremism in different parts of the continent. But this must be supplementary to and not a substitute for their primary goals of promoting active trade, minimizing trade barriers, encouraging sustainable and inclusive economic growth, promoting human capital development as well as promoting value addition in agriculture and agro-business development among others. In the same vein, the immense potentials of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) can only be maximally realized when there is concrete and proper economic integration and collaboration at the various sub-regional levels.

President Tinubu encouraged stakeholders present at the Summit to deliberate on ways through which African sub-regional organizations can help foster better intra-African trade, achieve food and energy security, promote higher rates of youth employment, alleviate poverty, and realize greater prosperity for Africans. He added that the Summit must discuss ways of making the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), a key component of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), contribute to achieving good governance and democratic consolidation on the continent. All too often, African leaders intent on staying in power at all costs have been the greatest stumbling block to good governance and democratic progress in their respective countries.

He called on those privileged to be in leadership positions to utilize the instrumentality of the African Peer Review Mechanism to call their colleagues to order. They must set and demand from African leaders' standards of democratic behavior that uphold free, fair, and credible elections, eliminate attempts to remove constitutionally stipulated term limits by incumbents, and respect the autonomy and integrity of critical institutions such as the judiciary and legislatures that are indispensable to good governance.

In conclusion, His Excellency emphasized that Africa can no longer afford to be the doormat of the world; a continent of street beggar economies that perennially hold out begging bowls for loans or aid. It is time for Africa to truly come of age and begin to fulfil her historic destiny for the good of her people and the benefit of humanity.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Charting The Future of Democracy In Africa

The panel embarked on a reflective and forward-looking discourse on the continent's democratic journey. The session brought together a distinguished ensemble of scholars, policymakers, and civil society leaders from Ghana, Morocco, Senegal, and Nigeria to delve into the complexities of democracy in Africa—its triumphs, trials, and the path forward.

MODERATOR



Prof. Peter Okebukola
Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library

PANELISTS



Dr. Leena Hoffmann-Atar
Chatham House, Africa Programme

It is crucial to understand that Africans do not inherently desire military rule or autocracy. However, when civilian governance falters, the risk of military intervention increases.

Dr. Hoffmann stated that the notion of declining democracy in Africa is both supported and challenged. Data from Afrobarometer surveys indicates that military coups do not necessarily reflect a fundamental distaste or dissatisfaction with democracy but align with other surveys that support Afrobarometer's conclusion that the issue lies with the supply side of democracy. It is important to note that the decline of democracy across the region is not a linear process but rather a non-linear trajectory. Signs of this decline can be observed through the shrinking of civic spaces, executive aggrandizement, and the concentration of power within the office of the president or prime minister.

She emphasized these signs as early warnings of democratic erosion, likening them to the "canary in the coal mine." When judiciaries lose independence and fail to uphold the rule of law, and when executives exceed their powers without checks from other branches, democracy weakens further.

Senegal and Malawi illustrate the importance of popular movements in maintaining healthy democracies. Dr. Hoffmann highlighted that these movements, along with

Panel Discussion cont'd.

responsive institutions like the judiciary, are crucial for strengthening democracy. In Malawi, popular movements led to the annulment of the 2019 elections, earning the constitutional judges the Chatham House Prize in 2020.

However, she noted that not all situations have responsive judiciaries or effective regional partners like ECOWAS and the AU. In The Gambia, ECOWAS successfully supported the transition to Adama Barrow's administration, but issues of executive overreach remain.

In the Sahel region, Dr. Hoffmann stressed that coups are not the root problem. Persistent insecurity in countries like Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger has led to the militarization of politics. She warned that this trend is alarming, as insecurity creates opportunities for military intervention.

When judiciaries are no longer independent, and when executives are overreaching their powers, these are the warning shots of the end of democracy.

When you have youth unemployment, underinvestment in public goods and services, these are the real threats of democracies, not militaries.

Dr. Hoffmann concluded that Africans do not inherently desire military rule. Afrobarometer's data shows that military takeovers often exploit public dissatisfaction with civilian governance. Rising youth unemployment and inadequate public services pose genuine threats to democracy. Addressing these underlying issues is crucial for strengthening democratic governance and preventing military overreach.



Prof. Pape Chérif BASSÈNE
Université Cheikh Anta Diop

Professor Bassene focused his remarks on critiquing the application of Western liberal ideals to unique democratic governance issues in Africa. According to Prof. Pape, the situation is quite intriguing from the Senegalese viewpoint. He shared a recent episode that revolved around

the conditionalities Europe has introduced to its continued economic relationship with Africa, focusing on democracy and human rights. He revealed that one of the main topics that sparked debate, even leading him to publish a newspaper editorial, was homosexuality.

Professor Bassene said that the debate on the issue of LGBT rights within the framework of African-European cooperation presents a new challenge for Senegalese democracy, particularly in the context of Western standards for demonstrating the protection of LGBT rights. He said that Senegal's Prime Minister brought this perspective to the university for reflection, as it is a sensitive matter requiring careful analysis. A quick search on Senegal will reveal that this issue remains a topic of discussion.

He highlighted the significant tension in Senegal between traditional perspectives and Western liberal ideals regarding homosexuality. He argued that the Western approach of enforcing its dominant social norms on Africa through domestic law is viewed by Africans as a hallmark of colonialism. This has sparked anti-colonial sentiments, leading to a backlash that undermines the aim of safeguarding minority rights. The argument is that African societies, including Senegal, typically use cultural frameworks rather than legal systems to recognize and address social behaviours such as homosexuality. Therefore, he believes African nations should be encouraged to develop their institutional arrangements to manage these human rights issues organically and democratically. This tension between local views and global expectations complicates the democratic process, challenging countries like Senegal to balance democratic integrity with respect for human rights.

Bassene also commented on other African nations. He noted that in Gambia, there are ongoing security concerns. Despite ECOWAS intervention in the country to restore democracy, the state of democracy in Gambia remains fragile. In Guinea Bissau, the political situation is also challenging. Although the President advocates for democratic principles, the civic space in the country remains obstructed. This complicates efforts by civil society to hold the government accountable and undermines democratic progress. These examples further underscore the fragility of current models of democracy in the African context.

He concluded that Afrobarometer has presented enlightening data from 2011 to the present. One graph revealed that both youth and adults aspire for a future democracy that is not dominated by a single individual or party without opposition. The data indicated that at least 80 percent of the surveyed sample shared this sentiment. Consequently, there is potential for progress towards a more inclusive democracy in Africa.



Professor E. Gyimah Boadi
Co-Founder, Afrobarometer

Findings from Afrobarometer surveys demonstrate a strong yearning for democracy and responsible leadership among Africans. However, citizens lack the authority and means to compel their governments to fulfil these expectations.

Professor Boadi shared that after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, a series of pro-democracy movements arose in Africa, beginning with Benin Republic. This phenomenon has been closely monitored by social scientists and academics. Africans are increasingly pushing for democratic rule. The Afrobarometer system consistently reveals that Africans prioritize development above all other political considerations.

He stated that numerous African governments have fallen short in delivering economic and social progress over the last thirty years and that Afrobarometer not only investigates support for democracy but also explores people's preferences for qualities of good governance. The consistent findings demonstrate a strong yearning for democracy and responsible leadership among Africans. Nevertheless, citizens lack the authority and means to compel their governments to fulfil these expectations.

When examining the future of democracy in Africa, he acknowledged that it is essential to analyze the successes of the 1990s and early 2000s. It is also crucial to investigate the reasons behind the decline in governance and democratic standards that have led to

Panel Discussion cont'd.

the current challenges in Africa. He said that Africa is not the only region that has embraced democratic governance. Japan, for instance, has successfully implemented democracy despite not being a Western society. Similarly, several countries in the West Indies have made strides with parliamentary democracy, which is considered a complex system. Therefore, frustrations with the practical implementation of democracy should not result in Africans abandoning it in favor of alternative systems.

In the context of African culture, particularly in Nigeria, he stated that determining which cultural elements should form the basis of a national democratic framework becomes even more intricate. Some cultures may have traditional age or monarchy structures that make a one-size-fits-all approach impractical.

He stressed the need to be pragmatic, realistic, and focused on ensuring the effective functioning of democracy. When individuals are allowed to voice their opinions freely, they consistently seek an accountable and democratic government. Hence, efforts should be concentrated on enhancing and fortifying democracy.



Dr. Yusra Hamdaoui
Université Hassan II Mohammedia

Dr. Hamdaoui stated that the world is currently experiencing a turbulent period marked by complexity and distress, adding that offering

simple solutions to intricate situations rarely leads to positive results. Therefore, embracing the complexity paradigm is essential when discussing democracy in Africa. To understand the future of democracy, it is important to first acknowledge the current situation.

She explained that the recent surge of coups in West Africa, Central Sahel, and the Francophone Zone underscore the ongoing struggle for legitimacy and power. The unresolved question of who should wield power, whether religious, military, or civilian authorities, is at the forefront. By addressing this crisis of legitimacy and striving for a balance of power among these three entities, we can better sustain democracy in Africa.

This situation is further complicated by the region's militarization, resulting from two decades of counter-terrorism efforts.

Dr. Hamdaoui stressed that it is crucial to note that coups, despite their violent nature, have at times been a way for Africans to assert their political freedom in the absence of peaceful power transitions. This situation is further complicated by the region's militarization, resulting from two decades of counter-terrorism efforts. Understanding these dynamics is key to shaping the future of democracy in Africa.

Furthermore, she emphasized the need to consider integrating civilian, military, and religious elements to establish a balanced power dynamic for the future model of democracy. Collaborating on power distribution is crucial for envisioning a democratic future in Africa.

Audience Interaction



Dr. Kole Shettima
 Director
 MacArthur Foundation

Dr. Shettima spoke of the current situation in Africa where the demographic majority is now a political minority. He stated that African democracy does not adequately represent women, youth, and persons with disabilities, who make up the majority of the population. This lack of representation poses a significant challenge that needs to be addressed. He stressed that it is crucial to rethink systems in a way that embraces diversity, turning it into a source of strength rather than exclusion.

Panel/Audience Interaction

To safeguard democracy in Africa, several key actions are necessary:

- Addressing internal inter-community conflicts over resources is critical, as these conflicts threaten governance and deepen societal divisions.
- Promoting inclusive governance through comprehensive civic education and grassroots engagement ensures citizens understand and participate in democratic processes.
- Embracing cultural diversity by adopting inclusive policies, ensuring fair representation, and protecting cultural rights strengthens national unity and democratic resilience.
- Respecting traditions in sensitive discussions, particularly around sexuality and individual rights, is crucial.
- Democracy must be inclusive, protecting the rights of all individuals, including women and minorities.
- Encouraging youth engagement and resilience in democracy is vital, as is improving trust in electoral management through transparency and accountability.
- Ensuring judicial independence in electoral processes is essential to maintain trust in elections.
- Finally, learning from effective civil society actions, such as those in Senegal, can provide valuable strategies for promoting democratic governance and addressing minority issues.



PANEL DISCUSSION

Voices of Tomorrow – The State of Democracy In Africa

The panel embarked on a reflective and forward-looking discourse on the continent's democratic journey. The session brought together a distinguished ensemble of scholars, policymakers, and civil society leaders from Ghana, Morocco, Senegal, and Nigeria to delve into the complexities of democracy in Africa—its triumphs, trials, and the path forward.

MODERATOR



Mr. Briggs Bomba
 Director of Programs
 TrustAfrica

PANELISTS



Emmanuel Zulu
 Alliance for Accountability Advocate,
 Zambia

I believe if democracy is to be achieved, people need to have the right information about it.

Mr. Emmanuel Zulu explained that democracy is often viewed as a system that promotes inclusivity, upholds the rule of law, and ensures effective governance. It represents a level playing field where every individual can participate and have a say in decision-making processes.

He suggested that the journey towards achieving true democracy has been a persistent challenge, with some progress made but much more left to be done, adding that there is a considerable effort required to bridge the gap and achieve our objectives. He shared that in Zambia, recent elections were held amidst a backdrop where the former president sought a third term, only to face opposition from the younger generation who emphasized the need to respect the constitution.

He stressed that to establish and uphold democracy, it is essential for individuals to be well-informed and knowledgeable. Without this awareness, significant events and decisions may transpire without people even realizing it. He further added that this lack of understanding has been a challenge in Africa, where numerous young individuals prefer to maintain the

status quo and avoid discussing topics such as good governance or fear consequences by those in power.

Many young individuals are now proactively contacting their elected officials, demanding transparency, and holding them accountable for their commitments.

Mr. Zulu suggested that nevertheless, following training from the Alliance for Accountability Advocates Zambia (AAAZ), he and his peers made the decision to act. In November 2021, they orchestrated an awareness walk, spanning 410 kilometers and traversing 14 districts. The objective was to educate and interact with young people, enlightening them about their civic duties and rights within society. Collaboratively, they stressed the significance of having their voices heard and educated them on democracy and good governance. This initiative has produced favorable outcomes. He announced that many young individuals are now proactively contacting their elected officials, demanding transparency, and holding them accountable for their commitments. The walk not only centered on civic education but also aimed to mobilize young people to actively engage in the democratic process beyond mere voting. This momentum will be upheld.

Mr. Emmanuel revealed that that in Zambia, a unique approach is taken to mold young people at tender age from grade 12. He shared that in 2023, his organization established a School of Public Speaking, a program specifically designed to enhance the public speaking skills of young individuals who have recently completed their education. He explained that upon enrolling in the program, they are assigned critical topics, such as good governance, to speak on. This approach stimulates minds and encourages them to think creatively. Before diving into the topic of governance, they must first have a clear understanding of what governance entails. Once they grasp the concept, they are introduced to the idea of good governance and its various aspects. Furthermore, they are provided with the necessary resources to conduct research and gather information on their assigned topics. As they explore and analyze their surroundings, they begin to ask thought-provoking questions.

He added that for example, if they are researching inclusion and notice a lack of youth representation in government positions, they begin questioning what actions they can take to address this issue. He shared excitedly that it is truly inspiring to witness many young individuals from the School of Public Speaking launch their own radio programs. These individuals, some as young as 18 or 19, are making a positive impact in their communities by utilizing their newly acquired skills and knowledge.



Democracy is every day involvement. Democracy is civic literacy. Democracy is access to information. Democracy is participation.

Nalenhle Moyo

Nalenhle emphasized the significance of understanding the impact of art and culture on society. She believes that art has the power to provoke thought, challenge norms, and inspire change. Through Arts for Change, she seeks to create a platform where artists can use their talents to address social issues and promote positive transformation. Nalenhle stressed that art should go beyond mere entertainment and serve as a catalyst for social change.

In her field, she places a strong emphasis on research and education as the foundation for producing films or music. Nalenhle actively

Panel Discussion cont'd.

engages with young individuals, working together to enhance their understanding of their rights, the legal system, and their obligations. This approach empowers them to articulate their views on crucial topics, including women's participation in technology, with confidence and insight. Prioritizing individual empowerment is key, as even minor shifts at the personal level can eventually catalyze major changes in legislation and constitutions.

Young people are feeling demotivated. While this is a challenge, it is also an opportunity for us to find ways to ensure that they remain engaged and their participation is meaningful.

Nalenhle explained that there is a prevailing sense of apathy among youth. The economic challenges in Zimbabwe have acted as a discouraging element for young people. Consequently, they are more inclined to search for better opportunities overseas. It is disheartening to observe this pattern, as it suggests that young individuals are losing the drive to stay in the country and actively engage in societal conversations.

She stated that nonetheless, this situation poses both a challenge and an opportunity for finding ways to ensure that young people remain involved and view their participation as significant. She shared that one strategy being implemented is called "closing the loop," where information is gathered through interactive sessions with young individuals and those in positions of authority. This enables Zimbabweans to watch parliamentary proceedings, ask questions, and hold their representatives accountable using platforms like X and Facebook Live.

She stated that by promoting transparency and accountability through the Arts for Change platform, young people are being engaged by offering avenues for constructive discussions and interactions between leaders and the youth. Another method involves organizing events such as music festivals that promote conversations on important issues affecting the nation. This inclusive approach has the potential to narrow the divide between young individuals and decision-makers, fostering a sense of empowerment and significance.



It is crucial for leaders to be held accountable and answerable to their people. The time for change has come, and the youth are resolute in their determination.

Aliou Sane

Aliou Sane explained how the Y'en a Marre movement has empowered him to make a significant impact in Senegal. He shared that the younger generation in Africa, specifically in Senegal, is awakening and actively working towards making a difference. The youth in Senegal have demonstrated their support and appreciation for the Y'en a Marre movement, learning from past mistakes and collectively striving to rectify the existing situation. He recalled that in 2012, Abdoulaye Wade was given a free pass for two or three years without any pressure or demand for accountability, which allowed him to establish a dictatorship. Macky Sall, another dictator, was also allowed to roam freely, which was a grave error.

Sane stressed that it is crucial for leaders to be held accountable and answerable to their people. He announced that on the 28th of May, the Y'en a Marre movement team would participate in a meeting with the new president to discuss reforms in the justice system. Additionally, there would be a meeting with the newly appointed Minister of Justice to propose innovative ideas and ensure accountability.

He revealed that the process of closely monitoring the actions of the new administration and questioning their decisions is already underway, marking a new approach in Senegal. He said that the time for change has come, and the youth are resolute in their determination. The younger generation is fed up with the status quo and refuses to accept certain terms.

Democracy is about day-to-day surveillance. You have to be present to see what is happening because you are a part of it.

Sane said that the newly elected president encountered numerous obstacles, particularly throughout his election campaign. However, the support he garnered was a result of his tireless efforts, continuous awareness, and the awakening of the public's conscience, particularly among the younger generation. Even fellow politicians admitted to being influenced by his approach, highlighting the importance of politicians connecting with the populace and being present beyond their offices to secure votes. This has served as an inspiration for them, paving the way for progress.

He recommended that other African nations strive to achieve similar success. The potential to bring about change lies in taking action and actively engaging with the people. The change in leadership in Senegal exemplifies the power of unity and determination.



Youth inclusion is about creating an enabling environment for young people to get a foot in the door, to thrive, to run for office, to be appointed and to be represented.

Solape Sonuga
Programme, Policy and
Strategic Partnerships Manager
ElectHER

Solape shared that ElectHER is dedicated to promoting the inclusion of women in various aspects of society, such as political leadership, public life, economic opportunities, and social engagement. She emphasized the need to highlight the significance of inclusion, especially with regard to youth, young women, and individuals with disabilities. She explained that representation in leadership plays a vital role in democracy, as it ensures that decisions are made with diverse perspectives in mind. By advocating for inclusive policies and creating opportunities for underrepresented groups, individuals are empowered to participate in shaping their communities and future.

She stated that efforts were made by women in 2022 to pass a quota bill in the National Assembly that sought to reserve seats for women within the assembly, drawing inspiration from countries like Uganda and South Africa that have successfully implemented quota systems. However, there has been significant resistance to this bill, both in the past and at present. She stressed that it is important to acknowledge that constitutional reform alone is insufficient; people must recognize the

Panel Discussion cont'd.

importance of women and young people in leadership positions. This requires a comprehensive approach to democracy, involving meaningful conversations and educating individuals of all ages, particularly women and young people.

She stated that at ElectHER, there is a strong emphasis on the fact that gender equity is not solely a women's issue, but rather an issue that concerns everyone, including men, boys, and girls. It is crucial to understand that increased representation of marginalized groups, such as women and youth, in political leadership and public governance has a positive impact on society. Numerous studies and research consistently demonstrate that when all segments of society are adequately represented, it leads to social and economic growth, ultimately benefiting everyone.

Moving forward, she stressed that it is essential to hold discussions outside of echo chambers. Even though some recognize the importance of equity, it is vital to enlighten those who may not fully comprehend its significance. Those in the private sector promoting capitalism may not realize the value of equity.

ElectHer's Agenda 35 Campaign during Nigeria's 2023 elections, led to three women currently holding political offices.

ElectHER promotes innovation, engages the public, and enlightens citizens through various interventions. The organization utilizes behavioural change communication to educate and empower individuals. Additionally, Solape explained that ElectHER places importance on hosting discussions and events, including a political conversation series, to educate young people on governance. This initiative addresses the growing interest in governance and democracy, especially after recent events like the EndSars movement and the Nigerian elections. By offering education and enlightenment, ElectHER empowers individuals to actively participate in future elections and advocate for accountability and transparency in governance.

She stated that as the upcoming elections draw near, it is imperative to emphasize the significance of mobilizing resources to assist young individuals aspiring to run for office. Merely having legislation in place is insufficient to ensure these individuals receive the necessary support, as running for elections can be financially demanding.

She concluded that ElectHER is actively engaged in mobilizing resources for young women interested in pursuing a career in politics. Initiatives like the Agenda 35 campaign have already led to three women currently holding office out of the eight candidates who received support. It is crucial to acknowledge the importance of enhancing resource mobilization strategies that extend beyond financial assistance to provide empowerment and connections to these aspiring candidates. The primary focus remains to advocate for these individuals and empower them to pursue their political aspirations.



Audience Participation

To effectively engage the younger demographic, particularly Generation Z, creative methods leveraging entertainment are essential:

- Integrating democratic messages into popular media can resonate with and captivate this audience.
- Social media's successful use in Senegal to elect a young president demonstrates its power for political mobilization, offering a model for other African nations.
- Harmonizing diverse identities through inclusive policies is crucial for democracy to flourish, ensuring all voices are heard.
- Comprehensive civic education programs are needed to create an informed electorate, fundamental to building a resilient democratic society in Africa.



CLOSING REMARKS



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

Dr. Aniagolu conveyed her deep appreciation to the Yar'Adua Foundation for their valuable contributions to the conference. Their dedication and hard work have played a crucial role in its success. She also recognized Trust Africa for their assistance in ensuring that the conference truly represents an African dialogue. The participation and enthusiasm of attendees from various regions of Africa is truly inspiring. This kind of collaboration and partnership among civil society organizations throughout the continent is the ultimate goal of the event. Dr. Aniagolu

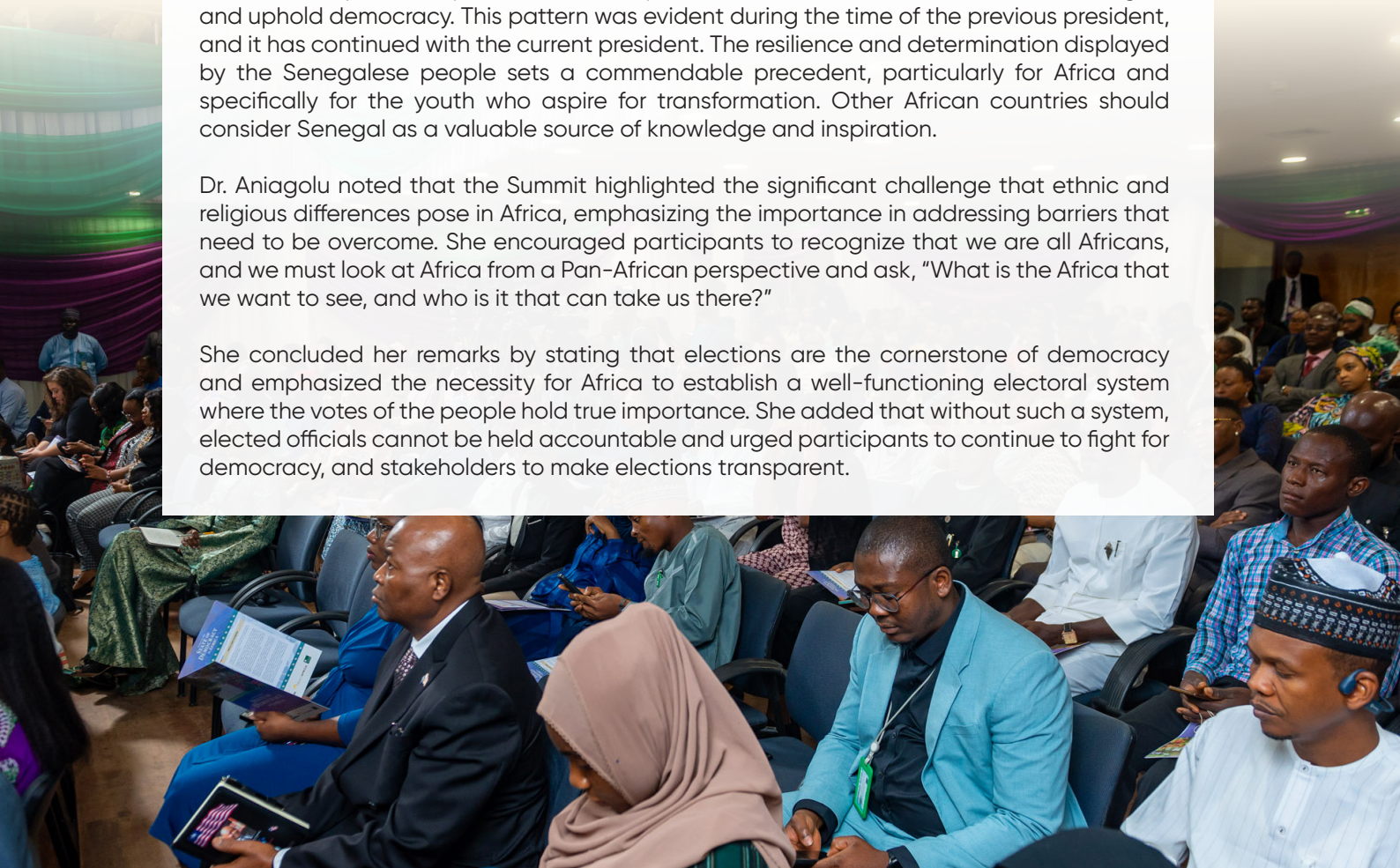
extended her gratitude to all the panelists and dignitaries who traveled extensively to share their perspectives and enhance the discussions.

She emphasized the main takeaway from the conference: Dialogue is just the beginning and the conversation about democracy in Africa must continue until it is firmly established. She stated that it is uplifting to witness the African people's desire for democracy and their willingness to participate in decisions that affect their lives. However, it is essential to understand that democracy is a process, not a one-time event. While there is a strong eagerness for change, patience and understanding are crucial, recognizing that setbacks are a natural part of progress.

She confessed that the interaction with the youth was truly remarkable, adding that it is crucial to listen to the voices of young individuals. She stated that Senegal serves as a beacon of hope, as they have consistently taken to the streets to advocate for their rights and uphold democracy. This pattern was evident during the time of the previous president, and it has continued with the current president. The resilience and determination displayed by the Senegalese people sets a commendable precedent, particularly for Africa and specifically for the youth who aspire for transformation. Other African countries should consider Senegal as a valuable source of knowledge and inspiration.

Dr. Aniagolu noted that the Summit highlighted the significant challenge that ethnic and religious differences pose in Africa, emphasizing the importance in addressing barriers that need to be overcome. She encouraged participants to recognize that we are all Africans, and we must look at Africa from a Pan-African perspective and ask, "What is the Africa that we want to see, and who is it that can take us there?"

She concluded her remarks by stating that elections are the cornerstone of democracy and emphasized the necessity for Africa to establish a well-functioning electoral system where the votes of the people hold true importance. She added that without such a system, elected officials cannot be held accountable and urged participants to continue to fight for democracy, and stakeholders to make elections transparent.



CONCLUSION

The Summit concluded with a consensus on the importance of reinforcing democratic values and institutions in Africa. Participants emphasized the need for inclusive governance that reflects the diversity of African societies and addresses the aspirations of all citizens, including marginalized groups such as women, children, and persons with disabilities. The discussions highlighted the urgency of addressing the current challenges facing democratic governance in Africa and the potential for positive change through collective efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is a need to enhance the capacity of democratic institutions to deliver on their mandates and ensure accountability and transparency in governance.
- Africans must promote inclusive governance practices that ensure representation and participation of all segments of society, including marginalized groups.
- We must encourage and support youth engagement in the democratic process through civic education and empowerment initiatives.
- Cultural elements should be integrated into democratic frameworks to create systems that resonate with African realities and traditions.



VOX POPS

The State of Democracy In Africa

We are told we are the leaders of tomorrow, yet today, our fathers still wait their turn. When will ours come?

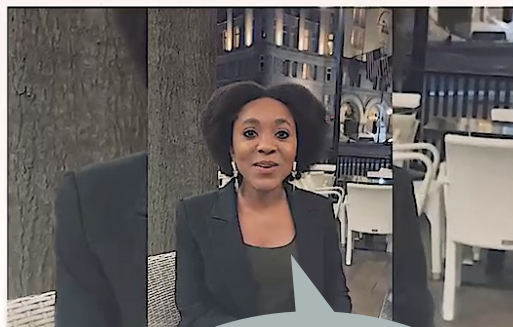
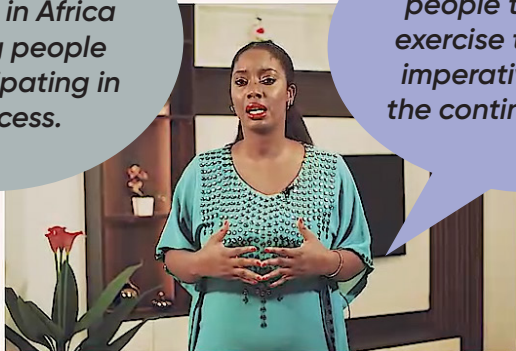
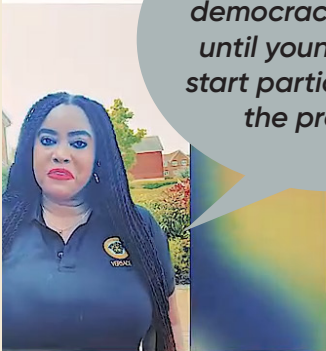
A strong democracy thrives on transparency, accountability, and open communication.

Nigeria's current democratic era has lasted 25 years. This is no small feat.



We cannot achieve democracy in Africa until young people start participating in the process.

The power of people to vote, and exercise their voice is imperative to taking the continent forward.



We must ensure we have the right values, morals, integrity and the heart for the people.

Democracy is governance where you and I have a say in decisions affecting us.

We need to awaken the conscience of the nation. We need to educate ourselves on what democracy truly means.





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