



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FOUNDATION
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Remarks by AU Chairperson, HE Dr. Dlamini Zuma
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AFRICA TOWARDS DEMOCRACY



**Moderator,
Esteemed Panelists,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

One of the key elements of the changing narrative about Africa is the acknowledgement that most Africans today live in countries that are democratic and are better governed than in the preceding decade. In 2015 alone, we shall have over 15 elections, and though a number of them face challenges, we believe the majority will and have gone well, including Nigeria, Lesotho, Comoros and so forth.

During a recent discussions with the former President of Poland and Nobel Peace Laureate, Lech Walesa we discussed this issue of democracy. He has a very useful way of approaching how to measure and deepen democracy, focusing on three components, each allocated 30%:

Firstly, whether Constitutions, legal framework, rights and institutions are democratic. For women's rights and our ongoing fight for representation, this is a very important component, because if the legal framework does not provide for equality, it is difficult to move. This is why legal quotas are so important. Quotas and merit are not mutually exclusive, what quotas do is to focus the mind to find the women of merit.

This formal democracy is important, whether for general human rights or for the rights of women, including whether the legal framework recognize women's reproductive rights, their right to own land, and so forth.

The second dimension is the participatory element, whether within the legal framework, citizens, men, women, young and old can exercise their rights and the environment is conducive to do so. Whether the citizens make use of this right to organise, to use the laws and institutions to advance their rights and do they participate in shaping their future?

For example, we cannot have free and fair elections where there is violence, repression and people are fleeing for their lives.

Across Africa, our participation in elections are high, especially that of women, and less so of young people. These two constituencies form a critical mass of voters, but often do not use this mass to ensure that their issues are on the table and that they are represented.

Democracy should include the diversity of countries, so that no group feel excluded.

The third dimension is whether democracy results in a better life and standard of living for all people, and lead to inclusive societies. In Africa this better life, is about access to basic services such as clean water and sanitation, to education and health care. If we don't have land rights, and still use archaic technology.

Democracy is about ensuring that leaders are elected to ensure a better life is created for the people.

For women, it means that women are part of all areas of human endeavor, in government, in the academia, in the media, in the judiciary and in the economy.

These three dimensions of democracy are all important, to ensure stability and peace, otherwise in a situation of ongoing underdevelopment and poverty, shall eventually lead to instability.

It is for these reasons that we have adopted Agenda 2063, the Africa we want. It prioritises education and training and investment in our people; the provision of infrastructure that connect our continent; the focus on agriculture, agro-businesses and industrialization, so that we create quality jobs.

That is why people's participation in their own development is so important, so that they can ensure that we have developmental and accountable government and institutions.

We have identified this as amongst the critical success factors for Agenda 2063, having government and institutions that not only create adequate conditions for business and investment, but also the vision to ensure investment in their people through education, science and technology, in health, water and sanitation as a public good.

Transforming the continent also means the involvement of all sectors of society, governments, citizens, business, academia, civil society. It therefore needs constant engagement and dialogue, so that each sector knows its role, and the area where we should cooperate.

Democracy, inclusive societies and people's participation are critical enablers for the development of the continent. This is why a people-centered Africa is a key aspiration in our fifty-year vision, Agenda 2063.

These dimensions of democracy need to be constantly strengthened and worked on, so that they lead to active participation and the creation of a better life for all citizens.

We believe that across Africa, and given the strength of our women's movement, there is progress in this direction. Many African countries have good legal and constitutional frameworks, although we must guard against attempts to reverse this. On the second dimension, Africa is also doing well, because our citizens participate in elections in large numbers. This is unlike other developed democracies, where voter turnout is very low.

Thus, Agenda 2063, we want to accelerate this progress so that we rid our continent of underdevelopment, conflicts and poverty.

I thank you

