

Intervention (5-7 minutes)

HIGH-LEVEL PARLIAMENTARY DIALOGUE ON DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA: “UNCONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL TRANSITIONS IN AFRICA” ONLINE

2 November 2022, 8:00-8:30 (9:00-9:30 Sudáfrica)

Thank you for this invitation.

As Chair of the European Parliament Delegation for relations with the Pan-African Parliament, **I am pleased to see how the Pan-African Parliament is taking its place back in the architecture of the African Union and on the political scene.** I would also like to congratulate you on the first ordinary session of this sixth Pan-African Parliament.

I am proud to represent today the European Union and the European Parliament in this high-level parliamentary dialogue on democracy, human rights and governance in Africa.

As regards the current challenges in Africa, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in early October that **the use of force “is too often considered the only way to resolve disputes” in Africa.** One of the challenges of recent years has been **the different coup d’état that Africa has faced. In 2021, the average of coups d’état was exceeded with six coup attempts** (which were successful in Chad, Mali, Guinea and Sudan and failed military coups in Niger and Sudan). **This year two coups d’état in Burkina Faso have been carried out already and a failed one in Guinea Bissau.** Alongside this increase of unconstitutional changes of governments on the continent, we also witness how **extremist groups, such as Da’esh and Al-Qaeda, continue to carry out terrorist attacks in the Sahel,** expanding their reach and network of influence on the population.

According to the **Moh Ibrahim Foundation’s latest Good Governance Index, although African governance has improved since 2010, progress has slowed down over the past five years.** In fact, I would like to point out that the overall governance score has experienced a year-on-year decline for the first time in the last decade. **This is a worrying trend, also because it is global.** In the last report on Human Rights and Democracy 2021 for which I was rapporteur, we pointed

out precisely how the trend towards autocratisation has increased in recent years. **Today, there are more autocracies worldwide than liberal regimes.** However, **it is necessary to overcome the boundaries of Afropessimism and stereotypes, and to work together with all those countries in the African continent that have succeeded in creating a democratic institution from zero after colonization within a rather narrow timeframe.**

In addition, **Africa is more democratic than other regions in relation to its level of development.** We must not forget that democracy usually goes hand in hand with development. Africa is and will continue to achieve both goals at the same time, and for that it will need strong institutions and good leaders.

Unconstitutional changes on the continent are a reality, but you have mobilized to give a strong and bold response. The African Union has been able to respond and has **continued to strengthen its tools for good governance at continental level.** This includes **the Accra Declaration on Unconstitutional Changes of Government, adopted last March,** as a clear example of the commitment of the African Union and its Member States to end these unconstitutional changes and strengthen democracy at continental level. As stated in the document, **existing national, regional and continental legal tools, such as the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), the African Governance Architecture (AGA), or the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), should be strengthened to improve national ownership of governance processes and strengthen governance, and conflict prevention and resolution.**

Moreover, the continent's commitment to governance and to give a strong response to unconstitutional changes has not been limited to sanctions or travel bans. The AU has also promoted the organisation of free and fair elections and contributed to the return to constitutional order, acting as a mediator, in cooperation with regional organisations. Here, for example, **peace talks to resolve the conflict in Ethiopia,** led by the African Union in South Africa, started last week.

The Pan-African Parliament must be proud of these achievements.

What should be done and what can the European Union do, in particular, to support the Pan-African Parliament and the African Union?

The EU and the African Union have long been engaged in **strong cooperation on security, peace, democracy and the rule of law**, based on the principle of “African solutions to African problems”. A **commitment that was renewed with the Joint Declaration following the EU-African Union Summit** last February. For example:

Through the **African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)**, the EU supports capacity building for the peace operations of African security and defence forces. In addition, we are jointly committed to **promote the rule of law and the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security, Children and Armed Conflict and Youth, Peace and Security Agenda**. This is because women and young people must be at the heart of African society as positive agents of change.

Our cooperation also focuses on **supporting the AU’s human rights compliance framework by fostering political debate**. For example, we are planning a debate in the European Parliament on the implementation of the African Union Human Rights Mechanism in DROI next December, with the participation of our Delegation.

I would also like to highlight the support and active participation of the European Parliament in election observation, through election observation missions, the latest in Kenya in August, as well as in other actions throughout the electoral cycle. Because free participatory elections are at the heart of our democratic societies.

I would also like to point out the adoption by the EU-ACP Joint Parliamentary Assembly of various resolutions denouncing unconstitutional changes on the continent and supporting political stability, including a 2021 resolution on *the role parliaments can play in strengthening international security*.

Finally, **I want to talk about the role of parliaments. Of our Parliaments.**

The **cooperation of the Pan-African Parliament and the European Parliament must be prized**: we must and we need to continue working by hand.

Governments must effectively use all governance and human rights mechanisms to avoid unconstitutional changes in government and promote good governance. Moreover, they must make sure that those who attempt to carry out unconstitutional changes are held accountable.

Together, we must **continue to support the establishment of independent institutions**, including national human rights commissions and electoral bodies.

We must **continue to defend the value of having independent media and highlight the key role of civil society organisations in our societies.**

We can also **use preventive diplomacy** to deter leaders from undertaking constitutional reviews to expand their power

I have no doubt **about the fundamental role of parliaments and parliamentarians in building strong institutions and strengthening democracy.** We will have the opportunity to further discuss this issue at the **next interparliamentary meeting of our parliaments, which will take place from 8 to 9 December here in Brussels.** During these two days, we will discuss peace and security, nutrition and food security, and the role of women and young people as actors of change.

I look forward to today's discussion and also to your visit to Brussels to continue this conversation and have the opportunity to meet many of you. Thank you again very much for the invitation.