

COVID-19 & DEMOCRACY IN EAST AFRICA: PROTECTING VOTERS, PROTECTING THE VOTE.

> CONFERENCE PROGRAMME



CET TIME

THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2020

- 08.00-08.15** **Welcome Remarks**
Elhadj As Sy, Kofi Annan Foundation
- 08.15-08.30** **Opening Address**
- 08.30-09.00** **Keynote Address**
H.E. President Goodluck Jonathan, former President of Nigeria and Chair of the Goodluck Jonathan Foundation; Graça Machel, International advocate for women's and children's rights, former freedom fighter and first Education Minister of Mozambique
- 09.30-10.30** **The state of democracy in East Africa today**
All countries in the region have transitioned to multi-party democracy, but most polls show high levels of dissatisfaction with the democratic systems. This is more apparent now in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, where East African countries are experiencing democratic backsliding. What has gone wrong? What can be done to fix it?
- 11.00-11.45** **Are elections giving democracy a bad name?**
All countries in the region organise regular elections, yet democratic freedoms are in retreat. What is going wrong? What can be done?
- 12.45-13.45** **The guilty party? The role of political parties**
Political parties in East Africa have at times been defined more by individuals and ethnic or religious identities, than ideas or institutions. They are also not always very democratic internally. Is this where the problem starts? Can party reform lead to further democratisation?
- 14.15-14.45** **Divide and rule? The instrumentalisation of identity politics**
The instrumentalisation of identity politics is polarizing societies and threatening peace across the region. What can be done?
- 15.15-16.00** **Anti-social media? Have the internet and social channels become a threat to democracy?**
Once championed as tools of democratic participation and expression, social channels are increasingly decried as weapons of disinformation, hate speech, and foreign interference. To what extent is East Africa concerned, and what is the right approach to take? This debate will turn on the recent report of the Kofi Annan Commission on Elections and Democracy in the Digital Age (KACEDDA) and its recommendations.

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- 09.00-09.45** **Settling electoral disputes – strengthening the judiciary's hand**
The judiciary has a critical role to play in building acceptance and tolerance for democracy in the manner through which it addresses electoral disputes. What is the record so far? What more needs to be done?
- 10.15-11.00** **Civil society, uncivil environment?**
Civil society in the region is vibrant, but often under attack. It is sometimes politicised. What can be done to protect and support it? What can it do to instigate change?
- 11.30-12.15** **The next generation? Youth inclusion in politics**
The median age in Eastern Africa is 18.1 years, yet youth is largely excluded from power. What future do young people want and how can they increase their participation in politics?
- 13.15-14.00** **The sinews of democracy: financing elections and election campaigns**
Electoral financing is one of those issues that has a fundamental impact on electoral outcomes, yet one that doesn't attract much attention or interest. The shadowy networks of local and international interests, which underwrite election campaigns, need to be unmasked and better understood if we are to fully appreciate the role they play in our elections and in potentially distorting democracy.
- 14.30-15.30** **With a little help from my friends: the role of the international community**
States have long benefited from international assistance in organising and financing elections. Political parties and civil society have traditionally set much store by international support for human rights and democracy, sometimes in vain. What are the limits on the international community, and what can - and should - we expect going forward?

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