



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation



TOGETHER.
TOMORROW.
TODAY.



Africa-Europe Week
14-18 Feb. 2022

Conference Proceedings

for

A high-level event organised by ECES ahead of the 2022 AU/EU summit

Theme: Strengthening the Capacities of Electoral Stakeholders in Africa
within the context of the European Union Partnership with the African Union

Date: 16 February 2022

Venue: Residence Palace, Rue de la Loi 155, 1040 Bruxelles, Belgium

with the patronage of :



In collaboration with:



Sant'Anna
School of Advanced Studies – Pisa



Venue: Residence Palace, Rue de la Loi 155, 1040 Bruxelles, Belgium

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Agenda	9
LIST OF ACRONYMS	11
Session 1: Italian and European partnership with Africa on democracy consolidation and support through the Innov-Election’s project.....	15
Erastus Mwencha: Former Vice President of the African Union and member of ECES’ Strategic Advisory Committee	15
Romano Prodi: Former Italian Prime Minister and former President of the European Commission.	16
Erastus Mwencha	18
Marina Sereni.....	18
Erastus Mwencha	20
Emanuela del Re.....	20
Erastus Mwencha	22
Christina Kokkinakis.....	23
Erastus Mwencha	25
Chiara Adamo.....	26
Erastus Mwencha	28
Calixte Aristide Mbari	28
Erastus Mwencha	31
Session 2: National inclusive dialogues and Elections in democratic transition, the importance of Peace Mediation in electoral processes	32
Fabio Bargiacchi	32
Charles Goerens	33
Stefano Manservisi	34
Fabio Bargiacchi	37
Sonya Reines-Djivanides	37
Fabio Bargiacchi	40
Victoria Florinder.....	40
Fabio Bargiacchi	43
Charles Goerens	43
Fabio Bargiacchi	44
Erastus Mwencha	44
Fabio Bargiacchi	46
Manji Wilson	47
Stefano Manservisi	47
Fabio Bargiacchi	48
Sonya Reines-Djivanides	49
Fabio Bargiacchi	49





Session 3: The future of Africa - EU partnership for good governance in 2022 and 2023: how to strengthen electoral processes to consolidate democracy and prevent conflicts..... 50

Victoria Florinder 50

Gilbert Bawara 51

Victoria Florinder 53

Monica Frassoni 53

Victoria Florinder 56

Calixte Aristide Mbari 56

Victoria Florinder 60

Cristina Castagnoli 60

Victoria Florinder 64

BIOGRAPHIES OF THE SPEAKERS..... 65





Introduction



As Founder and Executive Director of the European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES), the organisation of this conference is of great significance to me, considering the current developments in the global electoral landscape.

Since establishing ECES more than a decade ago **as an independent, non-partisan and not for profit Foundation**, our work has been dedicated towards supporting different electoral stakeholders and processes, mainly but not limited to Africa and the Middle East. Over this period, ECES has implemented projects in more than 50 Countries.

We work to promote **electoral and democratic strengthening** through the provision of advisory services, operational support and management of large projects mainstreaming capacity and leadership development via peer exchanges and comparative experiences, dialogue and the prevention and mitigation of electoral conflicts.

The programmes and activities implemented by ECES so far have been funded mainly with support from the European Union and its Member States (mainly Germany, France, Italy

Denmark, Austria, Ireland and Luxembourg), with 107 million Euros mobilised since February 2012¹.

Strengthening the partnership between Africa and Europe towards support to democracy, respect for human rights, electoral integrity and inclusive political participation has and continues to be a priority. This comes at a critical time, when the global community is facing new and increasing setbacks that threaten democratic and electoral processes as well as a global trend of rising authoritarianism. More than anything, this has highlighted the need to work together and strengthen the existing partnerships between Italy, the European Union, its other Member States and Africa in 2022 and the years to come.

Given this context, it became particularly appropriate to organise an exchange that would not only x-ray these issues, **but also identify projects and activities that could be implemented in the democracy and governance field towards addressing Africa's and the EU's global development challenges, notably in view of the EU-AU summit which held on the 17th – 18th February 2022, for the first time in Brussels.**

ECES took the initiative to organise a dedicated conference to discuss the prospects of cooperation strategically and jointly **between Italy, the EU and African Union** targeting strengthening of election integrity, human rights and inclusive political participation in 2022-2023 and beyond, particularly in **countries facing political transition**.

Organisation of this “High-level conference on strengthening the capacities of electoral stakeholders in Africa within the context of the European Union partnership with the African Union” received support from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and Department of Peace, Political Affairs and Security of the African Union. Furthermore, the event received endorsement and patronage of the Italian Prime Minister's Office (Presidency of the Council of Ministers).

This conference was organised within the Innov-Election's project², which was conceived and is being implemented by ECES since end of 2020.

¹ <https://www.eces.eu/en/funding-and-cocontributions>

² <https://www.eces.eu/en/posts/innovelections-project>

Officially launched on 15 December 2020 as part of the announcement by the [Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation](#) as part of its "Partnership with Africa" policy document, the InnovElections project was developed in collaboration with the [Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies of Pisa \(SSSA\)](#) and implemented with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). In the height of the CoVID-19 crisis, Innov-Elections served as a tool to sustain capacity development and peer exchanges to electoral management bodies and electoral stakeholders in Africa.

In 2021, the Innov-Election's project delivered capacity development and peer exchanges to more than 1000 participants across 35 countries. Considering the success of implemented activities in 2021, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to provide ECES with a further financial commitment to commence implementation of a Memorandum of Understanding that ECES proudly signed with the African Union back in May 2021. The MoU is geared towards enhancing electoral integrity, preventing electoral conflicts, and increasing the role of women and disadvantaged groups in electoral processes in Africa, building on both ECES and the AUC's experiences.

Since the adoption of the Constitutive Act of the African Union in 2000, the AU has also demonstrated commitment in contributing to democratic, credible and peaceful electoral processes in Member States through electoral assistance. Predominantly, the AU's involvement in elections has taken the form of election observation. Recently, **the AUC's role in providing technical and operational assistance to EMBs and other national electoral stakeholders has increased and expanded exponentially.** Concurrently, the AUC's Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) is developing an operational and implementation framework on electoral assistance to systematise its approach while considering specific contexts. The next step in this important process is the **validation of an AU Electoral Assistance Guide, scheduled to take place during a validation workshop planned for end of March in Dakar, Senegal.** ECES will be technically and financially supporting this workshop as a first materialisation of the MoU signed with the AU. The ECES-AU MoU is indeed rooted in the above-described context. For each area of cooperation mentioned above, the Parties have agreed on specific identified joint actions and common activities. In that sense, this conference provides an opportunity to shapen the intention expressed in the MoU.

These proceedings are the exact transcription from the High-level conference on

Strengthening Capacities of Electoral Stakeholders in Africa within the context of the European Union Partnership with the African Union and can be **seen as an important knowledge resource and reference for the partnership between the EU, its member states and the African Union** when it comes to partnership towards the promotion of electoral integrity and prevention electoral conflicts.

Internationally renowned Experts and policy makers from key institutions like the European Union, African Union Commission and other not-for-profit foundations, international Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organisations were sourced to share their experiences on key aspects of the electoral process including electoral assistance, electoral observation, election programming, development support among others.

During the discussions, high level public officials and leading international experts discussed a variety of perspectives in relation to future collaboration to democratic governance, electoral and peace matters between the African Union, Italy and the European Union.

All these align to **ECES' objective of promoting electoral and democratic strengthening** through the provision of advisory services, operational support and management of large projects mainstreaming capacity and leadership development via peer exchanges and comparative experiences, dialogue and the prevention and mitigation of electoral conflicts.

ECES implements projects through its uniquely crafted and copyrighted strategy called "**A European Response to Electoral Cycle Support - EURECS**". EURECS is implemented via **specific methodologies and tools** also copyrighted by ECES. It is an innovative delivery mechanism to implement **electoral and democracy assistance activities that are consistent primarily with European values and EU policies targeting the facilitation of the cooperation on electoral matters between the EU, the EU member states and their partner countries.**

ECES together with the College of Europe, Interpeace, Mediateur, Foundation Hironnelle and the Institute of Research and Education on Negotiation (ESSEC) is **implementing the European Resource for Mediation Support (ERMES project) on behalf of the EU.** ECES is providing the key expertise and the office for the project that is a strategic tool for the EU role in mediation and dialogue.



In this context, ECES is also a **member of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office network, the largest and leading civil society European platform of 40 independent organisations and think tanks from 16 European countries committed to peacebuilding and the prevention of conflict.**

On behalf of the board and management of ECES, I extend sincere appreciation to all panellists and participants, that took part in and made the high-level conference a success. We are proud this seminar was held as a side event of the Africa Europe Week 2022, organised by the European Commission. Special thanks to the European Commission, EEAS, European Parliament, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union and the Italian Prime Minister's Office (Presidency of the Council of Ministers).

We sincerely appreciate key representatives from the European Commission and Parliament, African Union and other global democracy support Experts for their availabilities, thoughtful insights and engagements. Their wealth of experiences shared in this conference has contributed to this publication.

Fabio Bargiacchi

Founder & Executive Director



Agenda

09:00am – 10:00, Opening Session: “Italian and European partnership with Africa on democracy consolidation and support through the Innov-Election’s project”

Introduction:

- **Fabio Bargiacchi**, Founder and Executive Director, European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES)

Moderator:

- **Erastus Mwencha**, Former Vice President of the African Union, Member of Strategic Advisory Committee, European Centre for Electoral Support

Speakers:

- **Romano Prodi**, former Italian Prime Minister and Former President of the European Commission
- **Marina Sereni**, Vice Minister, Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy
- **Emanuela Del Re**, EU Special Representative for the Sahel
- **Christina Kokkinakis**, Director for Values and Multilateral Relations/ Deputy Managing Director of Managing Directorate Global
- **Chiara Adamo**, Director, Human Development, Migration, Governance & Peace International Partnership European Commission

10:00 – 11:00 “National inclusive dialogues and Elections in democratic transition, the importance of Peace Mediation in electoral processes”

Moderator:

- **Fabio Bargiacchi**; Founder & Executive Director, European Centre for Electoral Support

Speakers

- **Charles Gorens**, Member of the European Parliament

- **Stefano Manservigi**, Chair, Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund, former Director General of the Directorate of the Development Cooperation, European Commission
- **Erastus Mwencha**, Former Vice President of the African Union, Member of Strategic Advisory Committee, European Centre for Electoral Support
- **Victoria Florinder**, Senior Electoral & Mediation Expert,
- **Sonya Reines-Djivanides**, Executive Director, European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO)
- Q&A session

11.00 – 11.30: Coffee Break

11:30 – 12:30 “The future of Africa - EU partnership for good governance in 2022 and 2023:how to strengthen electoral processes to consolidate democracy and prevent conflicts”

Moderator:

- **Victoria Florinder**, Senior Electoral & Mediation Expert

Speakers:

- **Gilbert B. Bawara**, Minister of Public Administration, Labour and Social Dialogue
- **Monica Frassoni**, President, European Centre for Electoral Support
- **Mr. Calixte Aristide Mbari**, Ag. Director, Governance and Conflict Prevention, African Union Commission (AUC)
- **Cristina Castagnoli**, Head of Unit, Democracy and Election Actions, European Parliament
- Q&A session

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
AUC	African Union Commission
AUEOM	African Union Election Observation Mission
CART	Community Action Response Teams
CECOE	Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organisations for Elections
CEN-SAD	Community of Sahel-Saharan States
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSA	Central Statistical Agency
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CVE	Civic and Voter Education
DCAF	Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces
EAST	Electoral Actors Support Team
EAC	East African Community
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECES	European Centre for Electoral Support
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EDR	Electoral Dispute Resolution
EEAS	European External Action Service
EIC	Ethiopian Insurance Corporation
EPLO	European Peacebuilding Liaison Office
ERMES	European Response to Mediation and Election Support
ESSEC	Foundation Hironnelle and the Institute of Research and Education on Negotiation
ESTFs	Electoral Security Task Forces
ESTA	Election Security Threat Assessment
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation
EURECS	European Response to Electoral Cycle Support
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FoF	Forum of Federations

GCERF	Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund
GIS	Geographical Information System
HQ	Head Quarters
IcSP-FPI	Instrument for contributing to stability and peace
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INTPA	International Partnerships
IRI	International Republican Institute
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
ISO	International Standard for Organisations
LEAD	Leadership and Conflict Management Skills for Electoral Stakeholders
LEAD-Q	Leadership and Quality Management system for Electoral Stakeholders
LEOME	Limited Election Observation Mission for Ethiopia
MT	Master Trainers
MEPA	Master in Electoral Policy and Administration
MMU	Media Monitoring Unit
MoR	Management of Risk
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
NEBE	National Election Board of Ethiopia
PCU	Project Coordination Unit
PEV	Preventing Election-related Conflict and Violence
POS	Public Outreach Strategy
PRAG	Procurement procedures and practical guide
PSC	Political and Security Committee
QR	Quick Response
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SoE	State of Emergency
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SSSA	Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies of Pisa
ToR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainers
UN	United n



UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
VAWIE	Violence against Women in Elections
VR	Voter Registration



Session 1: Italian and European partnership with Africa on democracy consolidation and support through the Innov-Election's project

Erastus Mwencha: Former Vice President of the African Union and member of ECES' Strategic Advisory Committee



Thank you very much. May I use this occasion to welcome everyone to this important conference. As Fabio mentioned in the opening remarks, democracy globally is on a decline. This has been exacerbated, among other things, by the Covid-19 pandemic. The EU Member States, the European Union, the European Commission and African Union need to adapt to major global challenges that are attacking democracy. Even before the pandemic, electoral support played a crucial role in counterbalancing negative trends. Removing institutional barriers and obstacles is fundamental to organising credible, inclusive, and transparent electoral processes. Electoral support needs not only to be a long-term activity with a larger scope. It must be provided at the right time and with the right measures under the broader umbrella of stabilisation and crisis response. While elections are a technical exercise by nature, they are also administrative and operational processes. Furthermore, they are still in the camp of political competition, marred by many tensions. This makes electoral processes unpredictable and a potential trigger for greater conflicts, particularly in young democracies or countries undergoing transition.

Our opening session is framed around the title "*Italian and European Partnership with Africa on Democracy, Consolidation and Support through the Innov-Elections Project*".

It is my pleasure to introduce the panellists for this session, starting with my good friend, his Excellency Romano Prodi, former Italian Prime Minister and former President of the European Commission, who is joining us virtually from Bologna. We welcome Her Excellency Marina Sereni, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy, Her Excellency Emmanuel Del Re, EU Special Representative for the Sahel, an important area and theatre that I'm sure you all know deserves great attention, internationally. We also welcome Christina Kokkinakis, Deputy Managing Director / Director for Values and Multilateral Relations,

European External Action Service. Welcome to Mrs. Chiara Adamo, Director of Human Development, Migration, Governance and International Partnership, European Commission. We also have with us Calixte Mbari, Ag. Director Governance & Conflict Prevention of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), who is really a pillar of the Commission.

I want to plead with my panellists to please try to contain their statements within five minutes so that we can manage time and finish as programmed by 12:30, when we could continue to interact during lunch break.

It's now my great honour and pleasure to invite our first speaker of the day, His Excellency Romano Prodi, to share his thoughts and experiences on the subject matter. Mr. President.

Romano Prodi: Former Italian Prime Minister and former President of the European Commission.



Thank you so much. I am very happy to be with you today, with a bit of nostalgia, because I spent so many years not only working on the subject of election, but also on how to work in a Democratic way with all African countries and the African Union.

My task today is only to give you a wish because I am not technically an expert on the current events in the electoral process.

However, I am obliged to start with the observation of my friend Erastus. Indeed, democracy is in retreat and elections are under threat because they are not no longer considered the first important step for democracy. I had a first experience of what is happening in the world and specifically in Africa about 60 years ago, when the process of decolonisation and political changes in Africa started. It was a long process with very young people involved, promoting the general idea that democracy was flourishing and a natural event. It started well with great hope, however, the process slowed down. In addition to this, what surprises me is that many democratically appointed leaders seemed to have forgotten the origin of their political power. They quickly became the enemy of democracy, the first opponents of elections.

What worries me more is this as was hinted by Erastus, there is a global process of denigration and abandon of democracy. It seems there are no more rights recognised by everybody in the world. When I was President of the European Commission and Prime Minister of Italy, I had many conversations with Chinese leaders as well as others, not in the recognition of

democratic superiority, but with the idea democracy had some sort of generally recognised values and goals. Now, there is a denying of this process which seems to show there are alternatives to the idea of general human rights, democracy, and elections. One of the reasons that could be advanced is that democracy does not deliver enough, and this makes people convinced it is not worthwhile to continue supporting its processes. And so, your job is difficult, however, it's worthwhile not only because of principles, but due it seems to be the only way of, let's say giving new hope to people in Europe and Africa, which is the most important thing. So, your meeting holding prior to the European Union and African Union summit for tomorrow and the day after is important because elections are necessary for the start of any process and if they are not fair enough, there is no democratic process.

The problem of elections in African countries is to be linked to the daily life of democracy so it helps them in monitoring and suggesting areas for development. We also need to take another step to build daily contacts between European and African institutions. In my experience, as elections end, it seems the job was done. However, the main challenge will be to monitor every step of this process and create resilient institutions. Of course, I have been out of politics for some time, nonetheless, I remember when I worked for the European Commission and assisted to create a joint University between Africa and European countries, with an equal number of students and equal number of Professors. This was an idea to create a new community that was simply condemned as money waste. This was the definition. Now, I am happy to say that the idea of working together to improve democracy is ongoing. So, this was only a personal example of the necessity in following up your fantastic job. Continue to support election projects because it is something that it is worthwhile to be brought forward in the summit agenda.

I thank the group implementing Innov-elections, to Sant'Anna and the European Centre for Electoral support for this initiative. I hope you will bring the outcome of this meeting to tomorrow's summit because we need a new link between Europe and Africa. Everybody is saying China is conquering Africa, Turkey is conquering Africa, however, the great supporter of Africa is the European Union. Only our disunity sends a wrong message. We must think together as you are doing today, on how to work together with African countries to help improve democratic progress in these countries. Thank you so much. Have a nice day and fruitful working sessions. Thank you.

Erastus Mwencha



this important subject. Your Excellency.

Thank you very much Mr. President for those important remarks and for your enduring effort in supporting democracy around the world. Our next speaker, is Her Excellency, Marina Sereni. And earlier mentioned, this seminar is sponsored with support from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As I speak about it, I am pushed to extend not only a warm welcome to her, but also to the Italian government, thanking her for this great support that has also allowed us to deepen

Marina Sereni



Thank you, Mr. Chair
Thank you very much.
Distinguished guests, participants and friends. I am particularly pleased to take part in this event. I'm proud to say it may be well considered a natural consequence of the long-lasting Italian commitment to the issue of promoting electoral rights in Africa. That is why we hope this will spark a fruitful debate on an issue that sits at the core of the Italian political strategy towards Africa which emphasises; the safeguard of democratic institutions through initiatives deemed to strengthen social peace, stability and security. As strongly intertwined, we highlighted the causal link in our strategic policy document "A Partnership with Africa", launched at the end of 2020, which stresses the fact that human rights violations, fragile institutions, bad governance and disrespect to rule of law triggers political instability, violent extremism, criminality, the proliferation of illicit trafficking and irregular migration. For this reason, enhancing good governance has become a core priority for Italy in recent years. This priority is in line with the ambitious African Union Agenda 2063, notably with Aspiration number three, which pursues the realisation of an Africa that engenders good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and rule of law. Furthermore, the constant and major attention given to these cornerstones of democracy marks a distinctive feature of the Italian and European approach vis-à-vis other international actors, with well established strategic interests in Africa and unclear political and economic agendas. Our African partners are aware of this, and in my view, their long-lasting appreciation for our initiatives confirms we are moving in the right direction.

In the broader sector of Democratic consolidation, electoral support plays a pivotal role. The electoral question per se often represents a critical turning point in the relations between institutions and citizens. On the one hand, credible elections help strengthen the accountability of democratic institutions. On the other hand, electoral mismanagement leads to social discontent and feelings of disaffection towards the authorities, as recent developments in some countries on the African continent demonstrate. In this framework, Italy has purposely decided to support the exchange of best practices, as well as the implementation of capacity building and training programmes in the electoral field to the benefit of civilians, individuals and professionals in several African countries to the extent they ensure a genuine and concrete African ownership.

Consequently, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation has co-sponsored the Innov-elections project which was presented on the occasion of the launch of a partnership of Whole Africa in December 2020 as earlier mentioned. The initiative is organised and implemented by ECES in partnership with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and the Italian Academic Excellence of Scuola Sant'Anna of Pisa. It aims at bolstering capacities of Africans in election management, observation and assistance. Indeed, the same bright pathway that ECES has undergone recently through the agreement stipulated with the African Union to strengthen electoral abilities on the continent. It has shown brilliant results, with the training of hundreds of participants from 35 African countries and the involvement of several African regional organisations. We wish the incoming project a genuine and extraordinary success by engaging even a wider number of people while always keeping in mind a full inclusion of women and youth. Against the background of everything we have been saying, there is an incontrovertible truth. The outbreak of CoVID-19 pandemic has put the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms under serious strain. We need to prevent democracy from slowing down and showing further deteriorating trends. Let us all cooperate to defend our most precious common good. Fostering electoral integrity and accountability, as well as the conduct of peaceful, genuine and credible elections worldwide is the right step towards that direction. Thank you very much.

Erastus Mwencha



Thank you very much, Your Excellency, Sereni for the important statement outlining the scope and objective to support democracy in general and in particular elections. May I now call upon Her Excellency, Emanuela del Re. As I said earlier, she's EU special representative for the Sahel and as you all know, this region is now the epicentre of conflict, having moved from the Middle East. It is also a place where violent extremists are manifesting themselves.

We are seeing unconstitutional change of government because citizens, as was pointed out by President Prodi, are disillusioned, and one cannot underate the heavy responsibility that lies on the shoulders of Excellency Emanuela del Re. Please speak to us.

Emanuela del Re



Thank you very much Erastus. I'm very happy to be here, also because I find myself among friends and especially President Romano Prodi, Vice Minister Marina Sereni and all the other distinguished speakers that are here today. I'm particularly happy because we are talking about a topic that for me is particularly significant, also since I have been an electoral observer having undertook more than 20 missions in my life, mostly in Africa and

Eastern Europe. Therefore, I have, let's say, a perception of elections as something that is not only the end of a process, but it actually conserves peaks and keeps its transformative power. Certainly, in this moment in which I am the special representative for the Sahel, I realize how difficult it is to keep the political meaning of elections because there is a lot of disillusionment with politics. There is still a fear of corruption. The very important principle that also President Mandela supported so much, such as "every vote count", is perceived as something utopistic. This is something that I find particularly worrying because if citizens lose their faith in the electoral process, of course, we risk that the political process becomes somehow idle or can bring some solutions that are more in the direction of extremism than in the democratic.

Of course, what I can say is that despite all these real risks even in the actual political Panorama, nowadays, also in the Sahel, I continue to think that elections have a very important transformative power. Further, I also want to say that the European Union believes

strongly in this, of course, Italy as a Member State, is particularly engaged in supporting this principle. Regarding the Sahel, which is a very complex area that now is going through a very serious crisis, I have to say that the electoral process is part of the more general concept of governance, which is the key political point in the new strategy of the European Union for that region. So, we are all perfectly aware of the fact that unless we do this, we will not have a proper governance and if we don't have governance, that also means no welfare state. In that case, we are not going to solve any problem because, even the problems of security, are very much related to the issue of governance. And therefore, of course, we must put all the efforts we can in favouring electoral processes and especially guarantee that citizens can express themselves.

In this sense, I want to say we ask ourselves whether elections actually empower citizens. To do so, we certainly have to concentrate very much on the electoral process. This, I have to say, is also the case for Mali where we are going through a very serious crisis. The transition has not virtually started, unlike other countries like, Chad, and therefore, we insist on the need to have a proper time frame for transition. We are insisting to make sure that the actual government expresses the will to initiate the proper political process and re-establish democracy through elections. Certainly, I can say that in this sense, because the crisis is so strong, I insist on the fact that the electoral process is fundamental, and therefore, think that we should concentrate on the process, favour voting, education, and other aspects as they are absolutely fundamental for empowering citizens. We cannot really achieve anything without sensitising the population in a way there is a general understanding of the importance in pushing for the electoral process.

I just want to say that the Innov-elections is a very striking and important project, that I support completely. I supported it when I was still vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, together with Marina Sereni in Italy, and I remain very convinced this is an important tool.

To conclude, I would like to say something regarding the European Union and its crucial role in elections. I will of course also speak of Italy's role within the European Union. Indeed, I remember, for instance, the first elections in which the European Union was a protagonist in setting up an electoral mission. I was there. It was 1994 in South Africa, the first multi-ethnic elections. In fact, I want to say that elections have a huge social importance. I remember, for instance, observing elections in Ukraine in 1998. And we are nowadays talking about Ukraine. And sharing one of my personal experiences. I am so impressed by a fact, that I as an Italian

has voted all her life, and for me it's a normal part of my life as a citizen, another big concept on which we should reflect. On the contrary, when I started observing elections in a remote area in Ukraine, I noticed it was such an event for them, such that demonstrates the ability of being a proper citizen in a Democratic context. For this reason, they decorated the polling station with flowers, with vases, with plants, with all sorts of beautiful things to celebrate the act of voting, which is something that we should also ritually do. Remember that is an important part and especially an extraordinary part of our citizenship. So, regarding the Sahel, of course, I am insisting on this and saying, yes, look at the elections. The elections are part of the negotiation now. It's very difficult, as you know, for a huge number of reasons that I cannot explain now, but certainly it's part of the problem of the crisis in Mali. Concentrate on the electoral process. Start thinking of educating citizens on voting, for instance, which would allow us also penetrate the communities, meet the people and start building Democratic discourse. Finally, I am very happy to be here because a project like Innov-elections certainly goes in this direction and we need more elections in the region of Sahel as well as everywhere else. Thank you very much.

Erastus Mwencha



Thank you very much Emmanuela, for that important statement. We certainly share your sentiments and passion in seeing elections being very transformative as well as a vehicle through which you can re-establish democracy. Of course, it is crucial to stress the importance of time and making sure that the electoral process is given its proper place. Our next speaker and I really contextualize it in thanking the European Union Commission, because, if there is an institution that has done much in conflict prevention and transition to democracy, it is the European Union. And today we have Cristina Kokkinakis, Deputy Managing Director / Director for Values and Multilateral Relations, European External Action Service.

Christina Kokkinakis



Thank you very much. President, Excellences. Good morning. Dear colleagues, first, innanzitutto vorrei ringraziare il Ministero degli Esteri per questo invito, and I will switch now to English for everybody. Coming from the Austrian diplomatic service, we are supposed to speak a couple of words in Italian as well. I will focus my speech on the elections and electoral assistance as well.

Thereafter, I will be supported by my colleague from INTPA in the Commission, who will speak on election observation before I close with four remarks at the end.

Basically, what we have heard from the preceding speakers is that there is retrogression in democracy. I would like to mention that 75% of today's world's population live in autocracies or in countries facing Democratic deterioration. This is a number we should be aware of and work with. Second, it is of course clear that we can no longer take democracy for granted. This is a fact, and this trend has both affected not only Africa, but of course also the European continent. In Europe, we observe the need to renew democracy, and of course secure citizen's support.

We are also currently experiencing cases of democratic stagnation. In Africa, the number of authoritarian regimes is now outnumbering the number of democracies. So, this is where we are. Much has been said already, but two main messages. The organisation of credible but also of inclusive and peaceful elections continue to constitute a core element of democracy worldwide, including, by the way, the return to a democratic constitutional order. Although slightly decreasing, the afro-barometers confirm that most Africans want to choose their leaders through the ballot box, and this, I think, warrants our attention. It is not only that people do want to elect or to participate in elections, but they also want credible and meaningful elections as well as a functioning institution to translate the will of the citizens. Second, the European Union has over the years provided support to promote the organisation of credible electoral processes worldwide. On the African continent, support comes in various forms and shapes, including technical assistance to electoral management bodies or other institutions, civil society organisations, media and journalists. These are the stakeholders we are working with, and I'm looking forward to Chiara, who will speak a bit more than from the Commission's perspective on EU electoral and democracy assistance.

Third, on election observations, I would like to raise particular attention to the work carried out in relation to election observations by both the European and African Union. This is something we have in common. This is a point of concern we share, and where we want to take action by working together. Both of our missions have the potential of being complimentary. It has a lot to do with synergies, avoiding duplications, as always, and the so-called integrated approach. The EU missions are often able to be more open, maybe in expressing criticism on implementation of the electoral process. While on the other hand, the African Union is often well placed to facilitate political negotiations. And this is really your advantage, your comparative advantage. This has worked well, particularly in Zambia, just to mention an example in the August election of last year, of August 2021. Of course, we will continue to work extensively as EU with the African Union to exchange, but also to improve our methodologies. And here I would like to refer to the ICTs, which become more and more relevant also in the field of elections. Clearly, the stronger influence of social media present challenges such as disinformation. And let me be clear here, we heard your request from the African Union to get more into this digital world, and we are well aware of this plea to help you on this way.

Another area where I think we should concentrate a bit more between the EU and AU, in order to promote added value is related, of course, to the follow up of an election observation mission and a follow up on recommendations from same. We need to find ways to strategically coordinate among ourselves, and also to find ways to actively encourage state parties on implementing these observation recommendations because there is nothing worse, let's say, than having recommendations which in the end of the day are not implemented.

To wrap up, I promised four messages which I would like to share with you. First, conflicts are overtaking the agenda, both in Europe, we see this in the EEAS External Action Service, as well as in Africa. And the AUEU summit 2022 will focus on peace, as well as on the security aspects. However, we see that long term development, prosperity, stability, et cetera, require that not only peace and security on the one hand, but also good governance, democracy, human rights on the other hand, are being simultaneously promoted. My second message would be that in view of the severe current challenges to democracy in both continents, by the way, we both need to be alerted to current developments, working together through exchanging information, again through the integrated approach, fostering cooperation, and identifying where we can have joint activities, will be crucial. My third point and this is very relevant for me is, in order to foster democracy around the world, we need to have the capacity

to monitor abuse of power and hold governments responsible for crimes against human rights. This is also for upholding the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which next year will observe its 75th anniversary and the Vienna Declaration Program of Action's 30th anniversary. Civil Society engagement is key. We haven't talked too much about civil society as of now, but this is really the key for all of us. Colleagues and Excellences, to finish: Human rights are not a dividing line between left and right.

It's just a dividing line between right and wrong. Human rights, and there you can be sure, for the European Union are universal and not just for us, for everybody. They are indivisible. And what do I mean by that? Indivisible means that we will not only continue to push, to promote, to defend civil and political rights, but will also engage with you and continue to strengthen our cooperation on economic, social and cultural rights. These two governances go together. There can't be civil and political rights without ESC. There can't be ESC rights without civil and political rights. They are indivisible and they are universal. They apply to everyone, everywhere. And they do not belong to anybody, not to a single government, not to the EU, not to the AU. They belong to the people. And with that closing remark, this is not a romantic notion or an old-fashioned notion to push for universality. This is hardcore foreign policy for the European Union. Thank you.

Thank you so much.

Erastus Mwencha

Thank you very much.



Madam Christina Kokkinakis, you've delivered a very important statement that I don't need to touch upon. You gave us very important statistics that are alarming, but also drawn the red line where you have indicated that the human rights are not negotiable. These are inalienable rights. And we look forward to partnering with you in advancing this important course that you have clearly underscored. Our next speaker is Mrs. Chiara Adamo, Director of Human Development, Migration, Governance and Peace, International Partnerships of the European Commission. One of the effects of conflicts, of course, is manifested by displaced societies, which leads not only to internally displaced persons but also to migration. And I'm sure you have a lot to say. And this is also a subject of discuss around elections and Africa's stability. And so, welcome Madame Chiara.

Chiara Adamo



Grazie e seguirò l'esempio della collega non perchè sia una diplomatica ma perchè sono italiana, per ringraziare il Ministero degli Affari Esteri e Cooperazione Internazionale, ECES e la Scuola Sant'Anna di Pisa e ora passo all'inglese.

The European Commission is truly committed, of course, to continue working and intensifying its cooperation to support democracy with the African Union Commission as well as with our African partners including civil society. Indeed, even if this goes beyond electoral assistance, electoral assistance is an important part of it. This reflects very concretely if you look at our commitments in the global Europe instrument. The latter is our new instrument for the next seven years, designed in order to reach the national level with 42 programs, which are country programs that are really going to include, as a focus area of intervention, democratic governance at the regional level. That is where we intend to work closely to support the African governance architecture and really partner with the Division for Political Affairs of the AUC. Further, at a global level, President Van der Leyen, last 10 December, announced a big ambitious diplomatic program on human rights and democracy for €1.5 billion. This was announced at the Summit of Democracy convened by President Biden. This instrument is meant to really allow us continue support to electoral observation, promote electoral assistance, inclusive and participatory democratic processes. One way, we are also exploring ways to step our efforts and join forces because as it was said, it is important to really work at scale and in coordinated manner on the ground.

One way we to do this is by launching Team Europe's Democracy Initiative. Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen just launched the initiative last December. This initiative for the moment brings together 14 EU member States and, of course, I also mentioned it here today because I very much look forward to a conversation with Italy on whether there is any interest in joining this coalition, as my colleague was mentioning.

Indeed, the EU Democracy Index 2021 was published last week. I also had a look and saw several people living in a democracy fall to less than 50%. And there is a real sharp year-on-year decline in the average group score. And this score was only matched back in 2010 following the global financial crisis. So, there is really a worrying trend which is global and of

course, Africa has not escaped it. As was mentioned by Ms. Del Re, the state of democracy and rule of law in Africa is also facing challenges in recent years and months with the number of military takeovers. There are of course also reasons for hope. Just a few examples. Kenya, Malawi, but also Zambia 2021 with political alternation through elections and vibrant youths and women civil society organisations mobilised for democracy, pushing against corruption in several countries.

The Afro barometer also mentioned Sudan or Eswatini, Uganda and South Africa. This is interesting because it shows a lot of variations in the perception of democracy by citizens. One thing is clear, 82% of African citizens reject one man rule, 77% reject one party rule and 75% reject military rule. So, at the same time we see young people's voter turnout and support to elections is declining from 83% to 75%, although remains very important. Meanwhile the demand for accountability, rule of law, checks and balances is really going up, how can we read this? I think Professor Prodi had told us at the beginning of this conference, there is a strong demand for democracy. The demand for democracy is resilient, but citizens are increasingly disappointed in terms of the supply. To reverse this trend, it is now more than ever, more important not to only show the value of democracy, or the link between democracy and long-term stability and prosperity, but also the possibility for credible and transparent elections, which is really the cornerstone of democratic processes. So, what are we to do? A few lines from my side to compliment the colleagues, of course, we need to strengthen the EU's partnership with the African Union Commission and support Africa's governance architecture. This shows the values of democracy by supporting inclusive, transparent approaches, good governance and delivering in terms of redistribution of health and carbon inequalities. All this will bring real stability, growth and support to national independent institutions, oversight bodies, civil society, youths and women in general. And finally promote the integrity of elections throughout the cycle. So, let's focus on the electoral process, as was so eloquently said. Thank you very much for your listening.

Erastus Mwencha



Thank you very much, Madame Chiara.

You have really linked the economic crisis to the challenges those countries face in sustaining democracy, bringing the trend that emerged from the financial crisis. And as it was said by Fabio at the opening statement, this meeting is also contextualized considering the backdrop of what has happened, the pandemic and all the rest so we can see that link. This raises very important questions. However, you are also going to further talk about the need for credible and well-organised elections and sustaining the values that we all cherish. Let me now call upon my brother and friend Calixte Mbari, who is Acting Director in the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security. As you know, that is the backbone of Africa in the area of governance, democracy and elections. And so, he's seen it all. He will be speaking at this session, really bringing the message from the Commission on behalf of the Commissioner Bankole, who's actually here in Brussels, but attending an important meeting in preparation of the AUEU Summit. They are currently drafting outcome statements before the leaders arrive tomorrow. And perhaps the reason they are unable to join us. And as you have heard, this is a meeting that is also organised around the issue of peace and security. And so, my brother Mbari, if you could take the floor.

Calixte Aristide Mbari



Thank you very much, Excellency, it's always a pleasure to sit on the same podium with you.

I therefore align to the protocol that was earlier listed, while acknowledging His Excellency Romano Prodi, former Prime Minister of Italy and former President of the European Commission, as well as all other panellists. I must say all protocol, at least observed. From what I see, the room is full of eminent personalities, delegations and I would like to greet them all.

First, on behalf of Ambassador Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, I would like to convey the greetings of the African Union Commission and its President, His Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat, who, as President Mwencha said, are all

busy working towards the success of the African Union – European Union partnership, which is being held in Brussels at the moment.

I would like to have your permission, to also praised Fabio and his dynamic team at ECES, for having associated us to this reflection event, as well as for the excellent collaboration we have had with ECES and with the European Union. This is in general, and also for the new initiatives that will be launched soon since we are in the phase of launching new programs.

The theme proposed for our reflection today, namely, “to strengthen the capacities of electoral actors in Africa, within the framework of the African Union - European Union partnership, is of particular interest to us not only as an organisation, but also as Africans.

As you already know, and I would like to reiterate here, the Peace and Security Department of the African Union Commission also has the mandate to promote good governance in Africa that is democratic, participatory and strengthens electoral institutions. This implies support for election management bodies as well as for all other platforms towards sharing experiences and reflections on electoral policies and processes on the continent. As a key player in the construction and consolidation of democracy on the continent, electoral management bodies directly contribute to the achievement of the African Union’s Agenda 2063, which aims to work for an integrated Africa that is prosperous and peaceful, led by its own citizens and represents a dynamic force on the international stage.

The African Union - European Union partnership is therefore essential for strengthening African initiatives towards the consolidation of peace and security through credible, transparent and inclusive electoral processes. This partnership must be based on the elements of convergence and principles which are set out in the instruments of the African Union as well as international and regional instruments of African community institutions through economic communities promoting democracy and good governance. To this end, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance recommends that States create and strengthen independent and impartial electoral bodies responsible for managing elections as a first obligation.

Second, to create national mechanisms to solve electoral disputes as quickly as possible. And then ensure that political parties and candidates participating in elections have fair access to public and state media, during the elections.

These are recommendations, but in reality, the demands are to be made for states to create the conditions for credible, transparent elections that have the objective to strengthen peace through elections.

This partnership must therefore consider support for the establishment of realistic, objective and consensual timetables to support establishment of the most credible legal and institutional, operational and financial framework, as well as appropriate mechanisms for their implementation, capacity building of actors in the electoral process, etc.

Among the most essential actions, for future programs, we must focus our energies on creating the conditions for credible and democratic elections in Africa. This reality invites us to reflect collectively and better identify the issues for a clear path forward. This will allow us strengthen our partnership, while also aligning ourselves with the methodology and mechanisms for their implementation. I cannot conclude without mentioning the new challenges we are facing today on the African continent, namely the resurgence of fictional changes in government. I am not going to elaborate on this question, since more opinions have come back largely on this issue to evoke the challenge that today are present on the African continent. In particular, certain regions of the continent, are challenged when it comes to promoting constitutionalism of the rule of law, are these all values that contribute to the consolidation of peace and security on the continent? This is a contingency that creates political crises and imposes political consultations as a compromise to get out of the crisis, that, in fact, constitutes a breach of the democratic life and rule of law, as we mentioned earlier.

Fortunately, the African Union and its regional economic communities are currently thinking about ways to strengthen institutional systems, the democratic environment in Africa and above all to put an end to this upsurge of change that will affect governments.

In mid-March, we will organise a major forum which will serve as an opportunity to start thinking about the changes affecting government based on studies already carried out to propose appropriate responses and put a definitive end to these situations.

Finally, I should thank the Italian Government for its financial support to ECES, our partner, in its mission to accompany efforts of the African Union and its regional economic communities

in strengthening democracy through support to the bodies responsible for the conduct of elections.

We are of the opinion and convinced that others will follow the European Union's effort as well, so that we can all together, within this dynamic partnership, continue to provide the necessary support for the consolidation of peace and security in Africa.

Thank you.

Erastus Mwencha



Thanks, Calixte for your statement, which has not only outlined the importance of the partnership between the African Union and the EU, but also the role ECES plays in that partnership. You have also gone ahead to give us the peace and security architecture of the African Union, stressing the role of the organisation, its member States and the electoral management bodies, which underscores the very important aspect of constitutionalism. We thank you and

look forward to your cooperation with ECES, which we so much cherish.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have come to the end of this opening session, and I'm sure you would agree with me that we have had huge contributions from this great panel, which was graced by none other than President Prodi and all these important personalities here. We now have a very good context under which the next panels will take place. With that, may I once again ask you to give an applause to these panellists for this contribution, May I now invite my good friend, Fabio to preside over the next session. Thank you.

Session 2: National inclusive dialogues and Elections in democratic transition, the importance of Peace Mediation in electoral processes

Fabio Bargiacchi



We would like to immediately commence the next panel in order to recuperate a little bit of time from the opening session where we had some great speakers, and, of course, needed to allocate appropriate time. In this second panel, we will focus on “national inclusive dialogues and elections in Democratic transitions and the importance of peace mediations in electoral processes, which is a key issue. And for this, we are honoured again to have Erastus Mwencha, former Chairperson of the African Union who we had already seen moderate the opening. We also have Stefano Manservigi, now chair of the Global Community Engagement Resilience Funds, but as everybody knows, former Director General for the now called International Partnership, formerly Development Cooperation, at the European Commission. Then, we have connected from Strasbourg, Charles Gorens, grand member of the European Parliament. Thanks a lot for your patience because you've been connected for a while now. And then here on my left, we have Sonia Reyes Djivanides, hoping I pronounced it perfectly. She is the Executive Director of the European Peace Building Liaison Office (EPLO), of which ECES is member. This is the largest European network of civil society organisations and a foundation focus on peace building and conflict prevention.

Furthermore, we also have Victoria Florinder, a senior electoral and mediation expert. So, without further additions, I would like to launch this panel by saying that the European Union and the African Union’s collaboration as we know, is based on the promises that the partnership on peace mediation and electoral support can yield better results than individual efforts. So, I would like to ask the panelists, starting with Mr. Gorens, how this collaboration can be further strengthened in view of the recent constitutional transition that we have seen and what you identify as some of the ways in which this existing partnership can actually work in this regard.

So, with respect for all, Mr. Gorens you have the floor.

Charles Goerens



I would like to begin by saying that we are very pleased to be able to say that, in recent years, we have done everything we can to improve mediation opportunities.

I was co-rapporteur for NDICI Global Europe, where we also stressed the need to improve electoral observations in Africa, documented resolutions and of course the will of Parliament and

other European institutions to move forward.

We believe that mediation is important for all styles, all cycles, at all stages of the electoral process, in order to prevent violence and guarantee peaceful elections.

The European Parliament's call, to which I am naturally associated, also goes in the direction of its Member States. This is both an opportunity to launch partnerships between the European Union and African States and of course also between Member States and African States, that are closely associated.

As we have said many times, mediation is essential. Although, I think it is often not emphasised enough. Europe is engaged in a cooperation that has very little visibility. The conflicts won have no visibility. While we are not only talking about avoiding electoral violence, this process has moved forward, thanks to the partnership between the European Union and African Union. This, of course, is also an example of a partnership that resonates with us all. This partnership has its roots in the fundamental documents of the European Union as well as those of the African Union. The references are numerous and provides an important partnership opportunity for the African Union and the European Union. As for the immediate future, we have had many elections observation missions in the past and this year has on the agenda, according to proposals by Mr Borrel: Kenya, Angola, Lesotho, Sao Tome and Principe, Mali and Chad. In Mali, of course, we are aware of the way things are unfolding as well as the reaction of the ECOWAS and the Group of 5 on what happened there.

Nevertheless, I also hope that, with the possibility of leaving behind some of the difficulties, we could again be part of these missions and accompany mediation missions, where appropriate, and with the means at the disposal of the European Union.

Stefano Manservisi



Thank you very much, Fabio. And thank you to everybody for being here. Very pleased to be with you. I think that in the previous discussion, all the general political framework has been set up, particularly around three elements. One, democracy let's say, is very often intended in different ways if we refer to the figures shared by Chiara Adamo, calling for more democracy but then expressing disappointment. Therefore, our first point is around democracy which is not maybe defined in an equal way. It is defined very often by output expectations. In any case, this is the first block to which we make a reference. The second is the block that sees elections as a way in which democracy is translated into institutions that takes legitimate decisions. Here, we have a mixed picture, because clearly elections are very often perceived as a formal process which are not delivered, or if delivered, are not done so in the general interest. In any case, there is a question mark on elections as such. However, this is the second block on which we are all committed to strengthen, bring forward, defend, or maybe to also decline democracy in a more effective way.

And then, we arrive at the preparation for elections, which is the core business. This aspect also links to how we eventually organise elections, that are credible and deliver institutions which makes decisions that fulfil the expectations of citizens. Therefore, my third block is that electoral preparation is a crucial moment because it goes beyond logistics of the elections, extending to the cohesion of other actions around the elections. This is about the concept of legitimacy, and that everybody should or be in a position to understand that these elections, this process, is in the general interest of all. The concept that it is not a dividing one, but an inclusive one. Therefore, the role of civil society and actions at their level is fundamental as it provides the ground on which violent extremism can spring. It's precisely where all those elements, that, by the way, were emphasised even more in the last period by the pandemic, has exacerbated inequalities, different taxes, discriminations, and all the perceptions which go with it. These are perceptions that obviously create more discontent, frustration and serve as elements for radicalisation.

This decline occurs in different ways across the Sahel. You can see it in Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and in other parts of the world. Now we are concentrating on Africa. However, this phenomenon is shared worldwide, by the way, as has been established today, including

also in the European Union. Therefore, the moment in which preparation for elections addresses social cohesion, sentiments of belonging and the sense of purpose is crucial. And it is in this segment we can call it mediation, or, let's say, resilience building, where a crucial section which can or cannot lead to a democracy is fundamental. From this point of view, I think of the position I occupy today, chairing this Global Community Resilience and Engagement Fund, an international foundation which is financing activities to prevent violent extremism and radicalisation. I have seen from close range, the importance to work at micro and grassroots levels, and to really listen to and empower people. Why? Because it is in this moment that discontent, radicalisation or polarisation comes and, very often, springs to violence. This violence is genuinely generated from the inside.

Violence which is more often are created to influence elections, deprive them of credibility, create mistrust, intimidate voters, take away elements of inclusiveness that are essential for the electoral process. Hate speeches, misinformation, by the way as Emanuela Del Re said very clearly, are playing a big role in the Sahel, including, the fake information, absence of information and ethnic manipulation. Again, just think about elected representatives playing one community against the other, instead of working for the general interests of citizens. This presents the process as a partial and not an inclusive one, where only the winner takes all, hence, providing a reason to oppose or play a similar game. Upon all this, we have not only seen phenomenal violence from the inside, but also the creation of the perfect ground for terrorism. This why experiences from the global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund suggests the importance of linking all these elements and empower civil society towards building resilience from within. There is no resilience that can be brought from outside.

The assistance necessary is more on training local actors on finding reasons for belonging to a working society which produces democracy and better governance. This is the point, the crucial role of civil society on this is fundamental. If we miss working with them, I am sorry, good governance agenda and institutional building will have a very weak ground. Therefore, I think this is a specific lesson we must learn. From my personal experiences in other positions, there is a flood of funds channelled to addressing crisis in the Sahel. There are at present, trillions of dollars spent on security matters. Although a huge amount is spent on institutional building, still too little is invested at the grassroots level. Not to hold brief for the civil society, I believe that, empowering more local civil society, listening and understanding to what the unifying factors are is important. Often, as we have seen in Dory, Burkina Faso and other parts of Africa are linked to factors that only locals can explain to the people; an Imam which is well

positioned, a local authority that is credible, a doctor which has supplied effective health care among others.

There is a sort of reality we must, or should be in a better position to support, otherwise terrorism will be there, no, is already there. Look at for example, what is happening in Capo Delgado, Mozambique, there is always a reason to radicalise people. The reasons could be religious, autonomous re-vindication, or any other. However, these are disruptive factors which must be addressed, and we have a couple of examples on how we can help with this. We must go to the micro level, empower local communities and train them to develop critical thinking that is inclusive and not derived from fracture. Critical thinking, is also extremely healthy for the institutions themselves, because institutions are stronger if people are critical, not just following without asking questions. I mean, the legitimacy is a complex concept which is composed of several small elements. In Nigeria, for example, in the experience of GCERF, we set up a group known as Community Action Response Teams (CART), which includes traditional and religious leaders who are locally generated, locally composed and trained.

Inter-religious dialogue is fundamental. Maybe we don't call it mediation, however, in reality, it is one of the most powerful mediation tools. Nonetheless, Inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue are very often manipulated. You see in many parts of the Sahel how this happens, where vulnerable people which for a number of reasons are more sensitive to the call of terrorist groups or from those willing to radicalise and manipulate people. This CART groups are very much led by young men and women. In an election organised for Kogi state, Nigeria, they served as a powerful tool to not only organise debates, but also drive election observation and other preparations. This also led the group to later become a local Observatory, building something self-managed by the communities facilitating a sort of inclusiveness, in which everybody finds his/her direction without predefining it.

As said in the beginning, and also by others, let's also understand that, in this moment, democracy globally is under attack in the sense of the question asked. Now, let's accept the challenge to discuss about this. Let's not fall into the trap that universalism equals our definition. Therefore to do this, let's empower local people, allowing them to understand this and then go to work. I think this is the point I would like to underline because, in my experience also, this is probably one of the most visible moments in which the formula of the Nexus between security, development and institutional building, takes its own meaning. Thank you very much.

Fabio Bargiacchi



Thank you, Mr. Manservisi. Actually, you raised extremely important and crucial questions, especially when it comes to the role of civil society organisations. This does not only deal with dialogue but mistrust in democratic institutions. Further, you have underlined the recent events in different countries that led to erosion of legitimacy of institutions and eventually, also to cases of terrorism. So, in this context, I think it is now the moment to have Sonya illustrate more on the opinion of civil society considering what an organisation like EPLO representing such broad network of organisations working on peace building and conflict management. So, when it comes to the role of society, what could be done towards enhancing the partnership between the EU and AU in this matter. The floor is yours, thank you.

Sonya Reines-Djivanides



Thanks for the kind introduction, also for the opportunity to sit here with you all. I took so many notes from this morning and found it hugely engaging. I also think this presents an opportunity to demonstrate the need to break down silos, with ECES being a member of a classically known peacebuilding organisation. I think we have seen the advent in investment and improvement of early warning systems. Before that, we always knew there were points of inflection around elections, hence we've all been working in this arena.

I just want to carry a few reflections of what I took away from some of the other panelists, without summarising them. The decline of democracy and the need for an inclusive civil society came out clearly. So, I would like to speak a little bit more about that. The need expresses the value of democracy to extremist groups. The more we sit with civil society, the more people will tell you “We know why our brothers and sisters are joining these groups”. They need to be presented with a clear alternative. We know what some of the approaches solve in the short term. However, in the long term, we need to look at that investment a little bit more carefully. Then, of course, another takes away from this morning is that “the timing of election support is critical”. More often, peace building organisations intervene very much in the preliminary stages leading up to elections and we have seen opportunities presented

where that really worked, because the engagements have been serious. So, in bringing civil society together from across the Sahel, or the Horn of Africa, one key item always emerges, they when asked what should be prioritised in supporting governance, democracy and democratic transitions, they say inclusivity.

So, we have got a pretty good language around women and young people. If you look at global demographics and not just Africa, young people under the age of 25 are majority. Therefore, it's hugely important that we look for innovative ways to include them. How do you include them? Social media and disinformation have become a massive problem. Nevertheless, it also provides opportunities. If we want to look at innovation, we need to include their ideas and thoughts, because this is a group who will be here to solve the problems moving forward. By inclusivity, we mean the whole of society. So, I have a list that's like half of the page on my note about what that means. I think the question isn't sort of checking the box with marginalised communities (women, young people, different languages), however, if we put ourselves in the positions of those we are not including, what does our society look like? We're going to have a much better idea over the long term.

When we also look at the statistics of conflicts, we no longer have a beautiful bell curve but a heart monitor. I think the duration, severity, kinds of conflicts that we're seeing, require us to take an approach where we break down silos, look at the inclusion of really meaningful whole societies, and to some extent focus on the need to respond quickly. We need to commit to long term solutions if we really want to look at transitioning and cycling countries out of conflicts. There has been quite a lot of good work done by civil society towards strengthening democratic elections and civic education, even though more needs to be done to engage with young people, as well as women and youth-led CSOs. They have different kinds of access. And so, when it comes to building trust with local authorities, we need to look at those partnerships in a more substantial way. When I say that, it's not just short-term stabilisation, but this is what the long-term engagement of the whole society is about, I think Mr. Manservisi mentioned it just a minute ago, the purpose and belonging, but it's also about hope. There's also an element people want to feel if they go to the ballot, they want their votes to make a difference, so they're able to create a different future for themselves. One that will allow them have different choices, and not necessarily have to move somewhere else to eat. You can't make peace with people when they're hungry.

So, I think we have sort of parallel conversations about this Nexus. When do you embark on peace building? When do you carry out democracy building? When do you develop governance? We must have a whole society and an integrated approach on the ground that is different. In terms of recommendations, we need to ensure a sort of an engagement, and I think we need to really unpack what that word means, but we don't have time for that today. What does it mean to meaningfully engage with the whole civil society? There are other things we can do as well. In terms of the partnership between the European Union and Africa, I think there are other innovative ways in which we can move forward. For example, I was just thinking about DG INTPA, a youth sounding board mechanism that has been developed. How can this or related tools be used to leverage more youth inclusion in election processes? Are there new and different ways in which we can have dedicated staff on youth engagement, electoral monitoring? How can we provide and strengthen the role of CSOs? This is not just financial. I mean, we also need to look towards the European Union for their political role in this as well, to make a space for African civil society in this partnership and make a space also for Europe, while also recognising the power imbalances that exist.

I think plenty of other recommendations that came out of the two segments have been implemented by EPLO, one on the European African Union partnership and then in the context of the upcoming youth action plan. We brought together young people to feed into that and both of those reports and statements are on our website. So, I won't go into too much detail.

In concluding, civil society is fundamental, but we ought to look at what that constitutes and who is in there. And we must recognise where we have strengths and there's no access. We must make a room for partnerships that bring both political and financial support to carry along all other organisations. This is because it's only when everybody, including those that are part of the problem become part of the solution, that we're going to start seeing change. We have to also recognise that; this kind of change takes long term commitment. So, thank you very much for the opportunity to be here today.

Thank you.

Fabio Bargiacchi



Thank you, Sonya. Certainly, changes take quite a lot of time, and then indeed, European Union and African Union have been collaborating for a long time, sometimes with very good results, sometimes with challenges to be addressed. Certainly, this year, we have seen cases in different countries where despite the partnership, despite the civil society engagement, some anti-constitutional changes occur. And then, I would like to ask Victoria for her contribution. What could actually be the role of peace mediation in electoral processes, knowing that these transitions seem to expand quite exponentially, considering elections in the different countries, also where we are working, since they are not exactly set in stone when it comes to the dates.

Victoria Florinder



Thank you very much. It's really a pleasure to be part of this panel. And just like Sonia, I think there has been many wise words and experiences already shared, it's also a very timely topic that, of course, takes place among other global challenges, and not only COVID related, but also looking towards the east.

The recent wave of unconstitutional transitions somehow feeds into illiberal peace by using force or the threat of force, or cohesion, in the name of peace and stability.

It also really underpins a conviction that is shared between the EU and AU that elections are the best way to make sure that the absolute vast majority of people can be heard in a way that provides for accountability, reliability and validity.

So that is why the unconstitutional changes in themselves undermine democracy and also undermine the role of elections. Having elections as the exit point point of undemocratic or unconstitutional transition is also complex because people in conflict-affected countries or territories are not voting in a state of security, safety, and normality.

The countries that are undergoing specifically military transition are in a state of exception and so the choices you make under such conditions will be probably different from those you would make in a state of normality.

The issue of conflicts around elections are ever present simply because they're the height of political competition. And so, the context in which elections are held always matter, in every election.

The preventative efforts and creating a conducive environment for elections are of utmost importance. This requires a longer, more holistic thinking around both electoral support and peace mediation and dialogue initiatives, funded or supported by EU, EU member states in close cooperation with AU.

And it's not that elections can get rid of tensions entirely: competition will always be marred by friction but conflict, and specifically the most visible attribute of conflict – violence – is something that comes at a very high cost, not only ultimately in human life, but it also sets a country back in so many ways. Conflict also correlates with voter apathy which can be difficult to reverse.

So peace mediation has certainly a role to play amidst elections and all around the electoral cycle. Electoral processes should ideally be surrounded by an outside layer of peace mediation-efforts that takes place concurrently all around the electoral cycle and at all tracks. And not only when conflicts have erupted.

This is not to say that donors must always fund or support four or five-year long peace mediation and dialogue projects in all countries, but it's to say that raising capacities in peace mediation and dialogue is always timely.

Peace mediation in electoral processes should be embedded in each phase of the electoral cycle as a preventative measure, installing or reviving an infrastrucur of dialogue across and amongst stakeholders at all tracks.

To bridge the fact that there might be strong sensitivities on the ground that warrants a distance between mediation and electoral actors - at least those commissioned, affiliated, or hired directly by the EU – there is now a methodology **developed to give actors on both the peace mediation and electoral sides sufficient insights not to miss obvious risks or opportunities** for conflict settlement in electoral processes.

This methodology does not suggest that electoral and mediation actors *should* coordinate or interact in a particular way: there are sensitivities around perceptions of impartiality that needs to be preserved since both strands of activities comes with its own separate mandate.

But bringing peace mediation closer to the technical aspects of electoral processes does two things:

1. it allows entry points for mediation support to emerge clearer;
2. it visualises the risks and limitations of mediation and dialogue and provides a realistic timeline.

I'll leave you with five points to underscore the value of peace mediation in electoral processes.

- Firstly, peace mediation has a far greater role to play than preventing election related violence. It is ultimately about creating conducive conditions for elections.
- Secondly, the development of a robust methodology on how to conduct peace mediation in electoral processes appear the best way to circumvent that peace mediation and electoral support activities are often kept apart on the ground.
- Thirdly, literature on peace mediation and its role in electoral processes has so far used cases of very flawed elections as examples. There are limited information and cases available on how peace mediation can help prepare the ground for electoral processes.
- Fourthly, electoral processes are often complex technical processes. It is not unconceivable that peace mediation in electoral processes face several risks caused by knowledge gaps about elections including laws. Peace mediators and those supporting peace mediation does not have to be fully fledged electoral experts: but peace mediation may up its chances to succeed if capacitation on technical aspects of elections were available in a suitable format.
- Lastly, peace mediation in electoral processes should also be directed towards local or municipal elections. These are usually not sufficiently supported but would certainly merit to be. Some of the most protracted and detrimental electoral crises has emerged through local election.

Fabio Bargiacchi

Thank you, Victoria.



There is a lot of food for thought.

Also, for hoping that between the EU and AU, there will be spaces for peace mediation in electoral processes. Actually, Commissioner Bankole had recently pronounced the importance of mediation in electoral processes, given what happened, especially in the last year across several African countries.

Charles Goerens



So, I have two feelings. First, I admire what has been said, the talent developed by the various stakeholders in regard to mediation, the solutions brought to a society where everything remains to be built and the very relevant analysis by all panellists is impressive. And I believe that the European Union is there to support all these operations, all these attempts to create living democracies in Africa. Secondly, I have a deep sense of humility

when I see that we have solutions to propose to African countries. My feeling of deep humility lies in the fact that we, between the West and the European Union, are not able to solve all the internal and external problems that arise in our democracies.

Nonetheless, the solutions we are advocating for Africa, to alleviate tensions, resolve or reconcile opposing camps, is very good. From this point of view, we have no lessons to give because we also cannot solve all the problems. When I look at the United States, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Turkey, for example, they all have the same common challenges these countries face during elections. These elections are very often reduced to an arithmetic operation, manipulated beforehand and we see how difficult it is, especially in the United States, to reach an end with mediation. The camps are so inflamed, so opposed, that we can no longer turn the tide. The situation is also frozen in Hungary and Poland. We see it in Russia, the opponents are silenced.

So here again, we don't have the conditions to get it done. So, I think we need to share our experiences and see the extent to which we have common threats.

I am thinking of algorithms that distort elections. I believe that the European Union can provide a part of the solution by making media platforms accountable. We demand that they take the lead and do a little bit of staffing to avoid or prevent any sort of manipulations. We have done this many times over the last few years so I think we should also open a site to study common threats. It may be a little bit beyond the scope of this round table; however, I think it's critical important as we approach an EU-Africa summit having an all-round. Thank you.

Fabio Bargiacchi



Thank you, now I would like to ask Mr. Erastus to share his opinion, his thoughts with us concerning the theme, given your two mandates as the deputy chairperson of the African Union. What should we take into consideration when it comes to best practices in the context of the AU-EU partnership in democracy and election support, thank you.

Erastus Mwencha



Thank you very much, Moderator. And let me once again thank the distinguished panelists, who have really touched the question that's before us. I think I want to start by mentioning one point that was underlined by my good friend, Manservisi since you asked me about my experience. Investment! where does the EU invest in this Democratic space? Unfortunately, a lot more resources are invested in conflict management and not in nurturing democracy.

And this I think also ties very well with the point that was raised by Mr. Gorens, who is spoke on the stress back when he harped on the visibility of those involved, the actors. The point on investment, if we invest at the right time, in the right place, we will get a better outcome, because at the moment, we seem to be crisis driven rather than anticipating same. Therefore, to me, it's very easy to mobilise resources both from European Commission and its member States if there is a crisis already. In Mali, people are moving, and everything is disruptive, rather than anticipate and invest. This is where mediation plays a role. This is where all the actors are measured.

The second aspect, I think that is coming out clearly is, where do you invest? It's important to invest in a natural democracy, but in whom do you invest? It's very clear that this must be at the local level where you can empower the society to feel a sense of belonging, a desire to participate, that they can achieve what societies aspirations are together and not playing against each other. If civil society can act in that space because they can easily engage at the local level, they can anticipate and confront extremists by providing the right information. When there is no property, there is always demand, so when there is no information, this creates a void for wrong information, however, when society is equipped, they will be ready. Then, in empowering these societies, it is also important to make sure they have trust and faith in the process. So then supporting the institutions, you don't have to be in the wrong hall.

Coming to election observation itself, this is also in a way, wrong investment, because election is not an event. It is a process which starts with, of course, the strength of political parties, the space political parties are given to express freely. People can have faith in the outcome depending on the strength of electoral management bodies. I think, this is the crucial role that this really brings out, so that if anything goes wrong in the process of, mediation can kick in. You then must have the proper actors to act. Often, when you look at Africa, and my colleague Calixte pointed this out, there is non-visibility of the European Union when providing support to many electoral management organisations, including African Union. If you look at the peace and security tactics of the African Union, they have non-visible elements, even though there are valid reasons for such. For instance, somebody mentioned here the case of Zambia last year and the role played by say former leaders, what you call the panel of the wise. They go ahead of planned elections and engage the leaders, those in government. They play a very crucial role because they have the instruments to organise credit. They possess instruments to finance, direct, manage, mobilise society and open space for participation. However, when you perceive something wrong, it is only then you can deploy those institutional elements which normally do not operate through what you might call "media or megaphones" with the promises they can reach those involved and converse to prevent deterioration.

Prevention must also have layers. Layers depending on what level you are looking at. Are you looking at those in management? Are you looking at all aspects? In other words, you must understand the structure of society where conflict is coming from, what serves as trigger and where its headed.

Then, of course, let me talk about one aspect I wanted to highlight. There is a need for coherence and therefore the need for this partnership. I will share one of the lessons I learned. I remember one time talking to late Kofi Annan, during his handling of a country going through transition. He noted that, when dealing with many external actors, if they is no coherence or proper coordination, and this was also raised earlier, they provide precise reasons for not managing mediation processes or bringing it to an end. This is because the various parties find reasons to pitch actors against each other. Therefore, the need for coordination is extremely important.

I stress the importance of this seminar, because we have EU member States providing technical/electoral support to Africa as well as the European Union being inclusive with all actors on the ground, including institutions like ECES, among others, so that we all work for one purpose and go in the same direction, which is “coordination”. I have been involved in election observation missions and all other aspects of electoral management. So, when you don't have that, the society is divided, actors are divided and outcomes are never credible. This is an important element and one that we must nurture. Therefore, it is so important to see these actors that can talk from different angles, however, have clear convergence as Mr. Manservisi, thank you very much. Mr. Fabio, thank you.

Fabio Bargiacchi



Thank you, Erastus, for this wise word and calling for coordinated efforts between the different actors which is paramount for success, especially in mediation and electoral support. So, I would like also to thank all panelists for the contributions made so far. We have done pretty well to recuperate the timing. However, before we have a well-deserved coffee, we would like to open up a little bit the possibility for participants, if they have questions for the panelists. Just mention your name and the person you address the eventual questions, if any.

Manji Wilson



My name is Manji Wilson, Senior Electoral Assistance Adviser for ECES and from Nigeria where you coincidentally cited an example.

In Africa where I come from, there is usually a high contention for especially elected positions owing to the influence and affluence they guarantee. This serves as a recipe for violent actions and deployment of disruptive tactics around elections. My question to Mr. Manservisi relates to what he sees as the best practices and excellent pathways towards designing mediation frameworks that will sort of incentivise vulnerable population away from engaging in negative practices that tend to mar the electoral process? I don't know if there is any such model that has been adopted, especially in Europe to serve as a guide for replication in Africa?

Stefano Manservisi



Well, the question would require a lot of time. However, I will simply want to underline a couple of points. First, be humble and don't pretend you already have the solution. The solution lies with the people who are then supposed to build resilience, at least in this area. Therefore, you need to listen, identify or help identify the most credible drivers. Because at the end of the day, it is a question of credibility of the individuals. People are not bad or good, they are influenced at certain moments. It is absolutely right in saying that elections are the perfect ground, I mean, politics at large is the perfect ground in which resentment, disillusion and manipulators work and from my perspective, I am watching at that from the preventing violent extremism which will easily turn into terrorism. Therefore, from this point of view it is crucial to act urgently, not just one way off, but have a network in place which is able to understand, listen and detect all the phenomena which are driving them to radicalisation, violent extremism and eventually to terrorism.

There is not a model which is suitable for everybody. The real methodological approach is to be humble, available, listen, identify, empower and then obviously follow in order to understand what has been produced.

Second is the coherence of actors. I put that precisely in the framework of the third block, “election preparation”, because I wanted to underline how crucial this moment which very often is a bit in the shadow is with everyone concentrating on the polls and its outcome. However, it is essential to invest much more in the preparation. Preparation means a lot of things. I see one important element used to prevent every form of radicalisation, and that is through actions at the community level. This is the reason GCERF is financing prevention of extremism at grassroots level from our experience in Nigeria. However, I could also refer to Kenya for example, or far away in the world, in Sri Lanka, the Philippines where there are all elements of mechanics. Nonetheless, differences in terms of actors, outputs and feelings that you maybe have to interpret from the outside, for instance in motion Observatories, Brussels or Washington driven is to be plugged into a network of awareness and intervention that is sustainable at local level.

Allow me to say and close here. In my long experience at the Commission, this is extremely difficult for big institutions, including the Commission to accomplish and even finance. The European Union through the Commission and member States are financing a global fund trying to identify this precise issue, because of its extreme difficulty, hence the reason I wanted to underline big differences in investments. For this one, I think it's still marginal even if it doesn't require billions, it requires to be close to the ground and allow people build resilience from inside.

This is what I want to say. You cannot have one solution for everybody by the way, something similar is also advisable in our societies where we are not all the time equipped to understand exactly what's going on and then, I think we are all living in turbulent times in which people are critical, full of hope and full of disillusion. In these cases, disruptive factors and terrorism find an excellent ground and I think they deserve a lot of engagement, awareness and working altogether. This is the only thing I can say.

Fabio Bargiacchi

Thank you, thank you, thank you Mr. Manservisi for this information and then I think Sonya would like to further contribute.

Sonya Reines-Djivanides



Just to add one point. Now, with the NDICI, there's the new regulation to perform complex analysis and that's really important in terms of informing not only the programming and engagements for electoral support but the general context. And if within that Avenue we actually consult and engage with young people as a part of that analysis, we are going to be much ahead in terms of the recommendations that Mr. Manservisi was saying. I think it's something new and worth bringing our awareness to so that we make sure our analyses are sensitive and collect relevant information.

Fabio Bargiacchi



Thanks a lot. I think we all deserve a coffee now. There might be some other questions but we should keep them for the second panel. I would like to thank Mr. Gorens from Strasbourg, Mr Manservisi, Ms. Sona Reines, I will learn how to pronounce your name well and Victoria Florinder, thanks a lot and the round of applause to all the panelists, thank you. Sorry, just a little announcement. We can have coffee break and try to reconvene in 15/20 minutes. Thank you.

Session 3: The future of Africa - EU partnership for good governance in 2022 and 2023: how to strengthen electoral processes to consolidate democracy and prevent conflicts

Victoria Florinder



Welcome back to the last panel of today, which is entitled “The future of the Africa-EU partnership for good governance in 2022 and 2023: how to strengthen electoral processes towards consolidating democracy and prevent conflicts”. It is a great pleasure to invite the new panelists. We have Gilbert Bawara, Minister of Public Administration, Labor and Social Dialogue in Togo. You are very welcomed here. We also have Monica Frassoni, President of the European Centre for Electoral Support, also with experience as a chief electoral observer and former member of the European Parliament. To my right is Mr Calixte Aristide Mbari, Acting Director for Governance and Conflict Prevention in the African Union Commission. And to my left is Cristina Castagnoli, Head of Unit in the Democracy and Election Action for the European Parliament.

I will read a framing question, but the panelists are also very welcomed to go off script and provide contributions that speaks to the broader title of the seminar. The framing question reads: “Italy, The European and African continent have vast but also different experiences of peace and conflict. Europe and Africa stand United in a common mission. That conflict is the antidote of not only peace, but also prosperity and the wellbeing of people. Some countries are reaping the benefits from democracy more than others that are still on their way towards it. What are some of our most valuable lessons from the partnership until this day that we want to translate into both policy and program?”

And I will give the word first to Mr. Bawara, please go ahead.

Gilbert Bawara



Thank you, madam!

I believe that exchanges such as this could not have been timelier, not only in terms of the Africa-Europe partnership, but also in terms of questions about democracy, elections, the rule of law and conflict resolution, because we are exchanging at a time when the African continent, or practically all parts of the continent, is experiencing a great deal of unrest. There are in fact many difficult situations. Whatever this situation may be: in the form of an acute political crisis, or even conflict, and at the same time, in the context of the spread of jihadism and terrorism. In some countries, this has sometimes served as a basis for major political upheavals.

Earlier, I was speaking with some friends during the break and noted that Africa has so far experienced two major political phases: (1) From the 1960s, the years of independence until the 1990s when, in most African countries, we have known single party systems; and (2) from the 1990s, in the wake of the La Baule conference, when there were, I would say, more temptations to democratise and introduce new systems of governance.

Today, we also see that there are a lot of upheavals and even challenges to all the systems that have been tried so far. So, the question is: Thirty years of single party rule, without success, without results. Thirty years of democratic peregrination, without tangible results. Now we see that another phase begins, sometimes with a little bit of populism or a little bit of demagogy in some parts of the continent. Dignity must be restored. Relations and partnerships with other parts of the world must be revisited.

So, my question is this: Is this not the time for the African continent to stop and wonder: To wonder about what? About the realities of African societies.

I am one of those who believe that the question of democracy, the question of the rule of law, the question of good governance, the question of the respect for human rights – which are among the foundations of cooperation and partnerships between the African and European continent, and the European Union in particular – have been posed in disarticulation with regard to the realities of African societies. On the one hand, because I believe that African states are under construction. Today, there is virtually no state that can say that it controls all its territory. A fact which means we are still under construction because a State is primarily a

territory, a territory that we control, which is not yet the case. Few African countries can say they have succeeded in building nations. I am not going back to the Berlin conference and the way the borders were cut. The fact is that, in the same territory there are sometimes population groups, whether we call them ethnic groups or communities, between which there is not necessarily a collective commitment to live together. This means we must simultaneously build States with all the attributes that this implies, building nations by bringing all the peoples who live in the territory of a country to consider themselves brothers and sisters.

As a following step, we must see the political system that should be built, not as a model, but as such, in relation to the economic and social development objectives that African countries and African societies must pursue.

So, these are the questions that are important for me because I feel that we have not asked ourselves enough, as Africans, about who we are, our cultural, historical, sociological realities, the directions where we wanted to go to by building states, building nations and forging political systems that would ensure economic and social development.

I will take the example of my country, Togo: between 1960 and 1990 there was a single party regime; in 1990 there was the National Sovereign Conference that adopted a constitution which served as the foundation and bedrock of the political regime and democratisation of the country. By taking some of the political realities of France, Germany and the United States, we have taken a bit of everything, stuck together and created a constitution that has never worked until today.

If I take other African countries, it's the same thing. There are formal constitutions, but they mean nothing in relation to the great mass of people, who generally do not have the same level of openness to the world to understand the concepts that we manipulate.

So, I would like us to discuss here whether we cannot rebuild the partnership between Europe and Africa by taking a break and asking questions about the foundations of this partnership. This is because our European friends will continue to say our partnership is based on several principles that I mentioned earlier, democracy, good governance, the rule of law – which are concepts that are not necessarily internalised and appropriate in the same way they are understood and practiced elsewhere.

So, I will stop here and hope that from our exchanges, there will be an inquiry that will help both Europe and Africa ask us about the foundations of the partnership and cooperation we want to build so that certain situations we are seeing today, including in West Africa, cannot be repeated, amplified or perpetuated.

Those are a couple of introductory comments I would like to make, and perhaps in the course of the discussion we could delve into some of the questions and answers I have. And these are not really solutions that I am proposing as such. Thank you very much.

Victoria Florinder



Thank you very much for highlighting the issue of lack of territorial control and this is something that, of course, means conflict can always prevail in those territories and also call for self-reflection. So, it's a good moment to look deeper into the partnership and see how the values and goals translate into actions while underlining the discrepancy between the collective action that we would like to see in our societies, the way it's also translated, legislated and plays out at the institutional level. And with that, I would like to pass directly to Ms. Monica Frassoni for your reflections either on the question posed or well beyond to share your own experiences. Thank you.

Monica Frassoni



Thank you very much for this great occasion to be here. For me as President of the European Centre for Electoral Support, it is also a big element of pride to be here today and exchange not only on what a lot of people consider only a technical issue, that is electoral assistance. To show how far beyond the simple technicalities, this question touches very deep on issues like the ones raised by previous speaker. And on that note, I would like to tell him that, in 1870 or 1880, a gentleman named Massimo d'Azeglio said, "Now, we made Italy, we have to make the Italians and we have not yet finished." Therefore, this question of nation building in relation to their institutions is really a story that is still ongoing and I don't think can be defined as something closed or defined. For this reason, while I fully agree that there is the need – not only for Africa but also for the European Union – to reconsider, in the

light of a very unstable peace we are experiencing today, at least in our continent and other parts of the world, to review not only its own relations, but also the way in which this issue of democracy and governance is seen in the perspective of economic and social growth and of all the global challenges that we are envisaging. I also believe that in this re-examination, we should not run the risk – and I'm not saying that Mr. Minister would do it – to relativise the global and universal value of certain issues like freedom, rights, the right to be governed fairly, openness and transparency, because this is not something that is relatively a culture, but something positive from wherever you see it, no matter what culture you have. This is not at all a kind of Western imposition, because I believe that this is an issue in the question raised. However, I believe that this strive for Liberty, freedom and well-being for all is there for all, although has to be adapted and not declined in a way that today seems probably not right.

Just to answer the question of Victoria – I could also draw from my own experience in relation to the work of electoral observation and assistance, which is, of course, much more limited than that of other people here. Many years ago – when electoral assistance was not existing among programmes of the European Union – I had the chance of being chief observer in two countries which are not in Africa but Latin America. For me, it was extremely clear that without linking the observation to some kind of follow up and also stepping up, it was very difficult to establish this kind of observation beyond just an episode in the relation with the country that probably would immediately after forget what the observation had resulted to.

Furthermore, credibility of what the European Union does in terms of observation becomes much more meaningful if the programmes of electoral assistance can count on good practitioners, good implementation and also on a framework that is based on a valuable and effective political dialogue which is done from the institution of the European Union in cooperation with the member States. This is because, as somebody said, if the donors and in any case, those working around the electoral process are not in agreement with each other, then the possibility of not having a credible system of assistance and observation just makes it even more difficult and weakens the capacity of these instruments to help with governance of the different countries. There is also the risk – which is not only a risk in some cases where it does exist – that with a lack of trust of those fighting for more democracy in those countries to rely or count on some kind of help and assistance from the international community. I want to insist on this because I believe that one of the more difficult questions for me to tackle is exactly the lack or decreasing credibility of the European Union's action. In general, the global community provides help for human rights and democracy in different crisis places, not only

because there are conflicts, but because, as somebody already said, the concept of democracy itself is weakening, and there is no antidote for that.

In some cases, and in other countries, democracy does not work. It does not bring the results that are expected, and therefore the trust of people diminishes. So, I believe that one of the most important elements of a working electoral system is exactly to help democracy work. Of course, I know everybody said it: elections are not the only element that are important in the definition of a democracy. To have a thriving democracy and therefore credible elections, you need to have a system of financing that is transparent, one that is fair and does not give too much advantage to some in relation to others. You need a media that is free as well as all sorts of elements that can converge to make elections work. In other cases, we were too lenient on the other elements, therefore, the exercise of democracy was disappointing, with very big backlash on the credibility of the whole process. So, this is what also makes our work as practitioners of electoral assistance so interesting and important, beyond the technicalities, because you have to talk with and work for both the beneficiaries and donors in order to make sure that those steps are somehow reflected in the result of what you do.

It is possible to judge the credibility of the whole process, and if it is not – emphasises why election observation is key and important – There has to be possibility to clearly express the non-workability of this process. Consequently, this process should be improved in a way that does not, of course, only depend on the practitioners of electoral assistance or the programmes presented by the European Union, but also on a very committed political dialogue, also on the part of the European Union and its member States. This has been one of the most interesting conclusions that I took from my own experience as both observer and electoral assistance provider, when this political dialogue is not there, it becomes more difficult to implement recommendations from observations because we cannot push for constitutional reforms if we do not have the support and framework of a good political dialogue.

To conclude, I think we are all participating in this big challenge of making democracy alive in the world. However, this is not an end in itself. We know all sorts of policies that impact global challenges including climate, inequalities, poverty, and indeed transparency need a thriving democracy. It is an illusion to think that authoritarian countries can lead to better welfare and economic development. Unfortunately, there are too many people, including in Africa, but increasingly in Europe, who believe this is the case and we have to prove the contrary, by proving that democracy can work, and elections can be fair and transparent.

Victoria Florinder



Thank you. Thank you very much, Monica. I think a display of anything but a limited experience in a career working precisely on these issues. You started out by raising the issue of citizenship, which was also something that Emanuela Del Re mentioned earlier. Although this is a topic in itself, it comes down to identity in which the nation and state can work in harmony, also considering the composition of the nation. This also signals the need to respect diversity, which is a universal value linked to human rights and building a political system that can translate this into policies and institutions. You also spoke on the value of political dialogue and utilisation of election observation and assistance as a facilitator or infrastructure that political dialogue can use to solve issues that are contentions and lie at the heart of the democracy. So political dialogue is what should be the surrounding layer to all electoral activities because just as dialogue, it has an intrinsic value in itself. Thank you very much again. I will hand over now to Mr. Calixte Aristide Mbari to my right.

Calixte Aristide Mbari



Thank you very much.

I should say at the outset that we are talking about strengthening the partnership, between the African and European Unions and, in this case, the role that institutions like ECES can play in strengthening that partnership. We agree that this partnership should focus on the issues of elections, but more generally, on strengthening the democratic culture and strengthening democratic governance in Africa.

Based on that premise, I must say that the African Union, as you know, has an extraordinary legal framework in place to promote democracy and enhance democratic governance on the continent. These instruments include the constitutive act of the African Union, which is the reference document and reference act of the organisation. Furthermore, you also have the charter on democracy, elections, and governance, which is an essential document that takes into account all the aspects we have been talking about, namely incentives to governments; incentives to non-state actors and; incentives to civil society. By the way, it is a pact between

leaders and the governed around promotion of democratic values. Beyond that, we wonder why some things don't work and why we need to make recommendations to change things? Clearly, we wonder why, with all these principles, which promote good democracy, good governance does not address the rejection of change concerning government and gives a role to civil society, having them serve as traditional actors, etc. Why do we end up in crisis situations, situations that force us each time to think about a model? Minister Bawara said he was thinking of a model for responding to these situations. That is a big question, and it is important that we reflect on it.

So now, if we go back to the context of election, we have to say that it is essential to consider the question of dialogue and inclusiveness. We have seen in some countries where, for example, amendments to the Constitution as initiated were not illegal at all, because the constitutional process was followed, yet, it led to problems. Why was this so? Because there is the question of morality, the question of appropriateness and approach for the constitutional revisions, which, for the most part, do not take into account this concern of inclusiveness, and therefore of internal consultations and dialogue. This therefore leads to a lot of problems and in some instances, we have seen this even lead to constitutional changes, including popular movements. In being specific, they had a reason, and I'm not going to quote them, but there have been several on the continent. This also raises questions about the effectiveness and implementation of these mechanisms.

When we look at these last few years, this resurgence of change has been subsidising the government, and there are real questions. Why is Africa suddenly facing all this? What are the reasons? What are the real causes? Is it a lack of governance? Is it due to poorly organised elections? Were there other factors that contributed to this? If so, which ones? Are these factors that will be contained at the level of these countries or the continent, or is this coming from elsewhere?

I ask questions like that, but don't really have the answers, because I think about it and feel we have to look at it country by country to see what the realities are, since they are not the same depending on how we move from country to country and the dynamics as well.

So, I would like to ask some questions so we reflect on the African Union as we saw during this morning's exchanges. The African Union, since the elections in Zambia, has set up a system, that aims at linking election observation with mediation missions. This is not done systematically in all countries that have elections, but in countries where there are risks, or a

potential crisis. These missions remain there after the observers leave, to start discussions and reflections with political actors. In the case of Zambia, we realised that the regime that had lost power had a certain fear, a certain fear of being victimised by the new administration and this wasn't contained, could create frictions and open the space for another crisis. With new incoming government wanting things to happen quickly, it sometimes comes at the expense of certain members in the minority. So, these missions are there to allow people talk to each other and in the case of Zambia, we saw the fruit it bore. We did the same thing in the Gambia, and now we're going to do the same thing where we think there's a lot of potential for crisis. This is a mechanism that is in addition to what the African Union is already doing.

So, the preventive diplomacy of sending, deploying high-level missions to countries where we are not very sure elections may well be held, in countries where there are blockages at the level of the process – maybe due to the opposition, or because of the party in power – precisely allows things to get unblocked and move quickly. All of this is being done, in order for us to have good elections.

We also need to involve young people, women and all civil society organisations so we can achieve the right objective. This is like the scenery I laid out, but I wanted to go very straight to the point about what areas we can work together.

Since we are talking about cooperation, we are talking about partnership: promoting dialogue is an essential aspect. How are we going to set it up? Well, we must not have discordant sounds, we must not have discordant meanings, and that is the meaning of partnership. When, for example, the African Union considers that there is a certain setting, it must not come back to make statements or positions that would call into question what has been done by the principle of solidarity. It is true that it does not block everyone from being able to express themselves, but it is essential that, in the context of this partnership, we are able to have dialogues that allow us to speak with one voice. That is an essential element.

The second element, I think, is the on-the-ground collaboration that happens for the most part between the EU and the AU. Generally speaking, when we get on the ground: we share information. In this sense, I think it is a good practice that deserves to continue. In terms of ECES, for example, I think it's crucial that things like trainings for long-term observers, trainings for short-term local observers, are constantly promoted as one of the essential elements to strengthen their capacities in the observation work, they do on the ground. To

strengthen their capacities in the observation work they do on ground is the capacity building of bodies in charge of elections - electoral commissions, constitutional courts as well as other services that work for the success of electoral processes, including civil society in raising awareness, national opinion, the media.

So, all of this is working in that direction, however, it should be done in good coordination, within the framework of this partnership and set out a specific programme of action. We would have to agree on, for example, which country we're going to support in 2022. What exactly will this support consist of? What are we really going to do? In a way that allows us to both know what our obligations are.

What should we do in this sense? Transparency is an essential element in this partnership towards achieving the desired results. The deployment of Experts is also an essential element. This deployment needs to accompany bodies in charge of elections, especially in countries undergoing transition. When I talk about deploying experts, this should not be limited to electoral experts but also to those that will support the process of drafting or revising the Constitution, since it is part of the mechanisms and link in the electoral process. When the Constitution is drafted and revised on time, also with the help of valid experts, it offers the possibility to lay foundations for the establishment of a legal and institutional framework that is most consistent for the electoral process. Therefore, a specific program focused on countries in transition is a crucial element for the success of electoral processes.

Then sharing of experiences. We would have to learn where things are going well to transpose elsewhere and learn where things have gone wrong, so that we know why we are unable to achieve set objectives and see how we can correct them. I believe that the sharing of experiences is an essential element to be considered in this mechanism.

Financial support. I will not talk about that because it goes without saying that if there is no financial support, no matter how good your work is, you can't achieve anything on the ground. Money is the lifeblood of the war and if you don't have resources, you can even have new projects ready, but nothing will happen.

Until constitutional changes can be sustained, the democratic culture could soon be forgotten. Hence, here are the main issues in my opinion, I wanted to be practical, to put the question in that way, so that we could shed more light on it. However, I must tell you that the continent is

currently facing difficulties with this resurgence of change that concerns the government and that there is an urgent need for action. As I speak, for example in Mali, the teams are being deployed – from the ECOWAS, the United Nations, etc. – to help review and redefine the electoral timetable. So, if we have to go to Mali, Fabio, I think we must go now. We must go to Mali now if we want to support the process so that we can have a good election later. It is also the same for Chad and all other countries in transition. In addition to other potential countries, which deserve to be followed. There is Kenya, Angola, there are a few countries that deserve our special attention this year and we must do it very quickly. Thank you.

Victoria Florinder



Thank you very much. Very good and concrete recommendations. You have called for a deeper analysis to better understand the motives of these undemocratic unconstitutional transitions while also underlining the value of coupling election observation with mediation and by doing so, also apply some moral pressure on leaders to remain within the realms of democracy and the code they may have signed. You called for a deeper cooperation and underpinned the value of deploying technical expertise all around the electoral cycle, starting with the constitutional drafting or revision. Lastly, you highlighted the value of continuing the dialogue even in the face of challenges and identify ways to really maximise the comparative advantages between the African Union and the European Union. Thank you very much gain, I will now hand over to Cristina Castagnoli, who will be our last speaker of the day, after which we will close the panel. Cristina, the floor is yours.

Cristina Castagnoli



Thank you, Victoria. It's difficult to be the last obstacle between you and your lunch. I would try to make it short and maybe also be a little bit provocative and self-critical on several issues.

First, I would like to say to Mr. Mbari that I renew the condolences of the European Parliament for the death of Guy Cyrille Tapoko, who was my colleague and in charge of election observation for the African Union. We worked together for many years, so please accept my condolences, Mr Mbari.

The European Parliament has been observing elections in Africa since 1996. So far, more than 60 elections have been observed. Personally, I have observed around 20 elections in the last years, and can tell you that I have a mixed feeling. You have cases like Gambia, Zambia, Ghana, where we can call success stories, then you have elections like the one in Ethiopia in 2005. Maybe people will remember it was a disaster, for some, while for others, a big success. There are kids in Ethiopia, young girls called Ana who are now 15 years old, named after Ana Gomes who was our Chief Observer at that time. She made an impact, such an impact that many girls have her name. Then you have catastrophic observations, like in Gabon where our chief observer was spied on and there were fake news about her secretly meeting the opposition in a hotel, with newspapers really harassing the mission and expelling our Experts. So, it's really a story of mixed feelings.

Here's what I would like express as Victoria asked, to provide you with some reflections on how to better make sure that these two communities of election observers and technical assistance providers speak more to each other. Very often, people call us the observance, the Talibans', the Orthodox, saying we just want to observe. We cannot use the word mediation. If I use the word mediation with my colleagues, they will cut my head. However, the reality is greyer. It's a grey area where even in countries like I earlier mentioned to Stefano, like Honduras, where we had to conduct an observation, we were obliged embark on mediation because we found ourselves in the middle of almost a civil war as a result of the chief observer who belonged to the far left, telling the people that a far-right President won the election. By so doing, she really prevented the civil war. She said there were not frauds, however, in doing so, you have to be credible. You must also understand you are not only there to present your findings, hold a press conference and then leave. That said, everything is a process. This is the concept Monica was expressing when she emphasised the need for more follow up. The idea of not only concentrating on election day but consider the election within the electoral cycle: this now is a reality. This is really something that is in the agenda of the election observation community and in the last years, the EEAS has achieved a lot of progress in being more consistent with this follow up, as well as setting up a database with recommendations.

Further on, I think a lot of work has been done, however, if you look at Africa, we still see that only 15% of recommendations are implemented and 20% partially implemented. So, the rate is still very low. We have an example of Nigeria where we keep observing since 2003 and recommendations are not implemented. So, someone wonders why we keep going to observe elections in Nigeria. It is very expensive and then you know how this logic works. Being in a

country is also a question of visibility for the European Union as well as being a heavyweight. So, when I was in the cabinet of Lady Ashton and proposed to my colleagues in the geographical not to go to Nigeria, there was this attitude “Nigeria”? You must observe Nigeria, you have to be there”. However, this should not be behind the logic when you decide to observe an election. The logic should be the impact you can have and where we have noticed that the recommendations have a higher implementation rate, very often this is related with well-resourced and independent election management bodies. This is what Mr. Mbari was referring to. This really is a very positive correlation. When the election management body works, and is well financed and independent, the recommendations are implemented. This is why it is good that ECES is working a lot with management bodies in your projects.

Another positive correlation between the implementation rates and good implementation rate is when domestic civil society and city observers are strong. This is because, when we leave, they stay and make sure that the points raised in our recommendation are high on the agenda. Then again, I know that you are working with citizen observers and others, especially in this time of CoVID-19 when we couldn't really go and observe, we relied a lot on the work of the citizen observers. So, it is important you continue to bridge all these links because citizen observers as you know face a lot of pressure in the country being observed.

When I was in Mozambique in 2019, the head of the local observers was killed by the police. This was known because the police had a car accident just after the killing. So, we went to see the President of Mozambique, asking to launch an investigation, noting we knew that he was killed by the police with our Chief Observer making a clear statement about that. Protecting citizen observers and making sure they have resources to work with is key.

I also wanted to say a word about our cooperation with the African Union. I know it has improved in the last years. There are also projects between the African Union and European Union. The difficulty for you is clear and more difficult because you observe your own member States' and we do not. Hence, sometimes it's easier for us to say things that you cannot say. However, it is also true that you have a bigger role. I know you have developed conflict prevention, mediation and technical assistance so you don't undertake observation, and this sometimes is the problem. It is a cleavage that also happened when UN is involved. An example was when the UN joined us to observe the election in Iraq while at the same time providing assistance to the Iraqi system. This is not easy. That is why we can be the bad guys. Sometimes when we observe, we can tell the truth, maybe more than you, however, we know

that you are behind, that you are there and at the end, even if election observation cannot be mediation, as we said, it is clear that mediation and conflict prevention is needed.

I think we are proud that the European Parliament is the first to have requested conflict prevention actors in the EU institution and election observation experts a couple of years ago, to sit together around the same table and discuss more. This is because you sometimes have your Chief Observer in the middle of a conflict situation and has no means, no ability, no staff that can help him on that. Therefore, efficient communication between the conflict prevention community, election observation community, election assistance providers, the democracy support community and all such mechanisms, will ensure complementarity in working together. In the end, the mission of election observation is implementing recommendations, helping the country reform its system and not going there and obstruct the process.

To finish on three challenges, we have ahead of us in this period of the pandemic. We see how important local observation is, because we couldn't go and observe in the last couple of years. We need to also consider the challenge of fake observation because recently, you have more institutions popping up like champions. We saw, for example in Mozambique that Russia was behind some of these institutions. They were even teaching how to cheat the European Union observers because they know the way we work. So, we spoke with people that knew the answer they have to give us. Speaking with various interlocutors, we understood that the Russians were intervening in this respect, and this is really something scary because we have to be credible as international observers and these fake observations are really awful.

The third challenge of course is digitalisation of elections in Africa. As you know, in the European Union, we are going back to paper. Even countries like the Netherlands that have tested the digital is now back to paper (manual balloting) due to the fear of accuracy, et cetera. While in Africa, everything is getting the more digitalised. This is a big question mark. How do you observe a black box? Can you really say you have properly observed elections? And there is still a big debate because we don't want to have experts gain access to the system, and eventually certify that the system is correct or not correct. It is not our job. We are just observers. For example, we could observe the tenders on how this machine is selected. I mean there are other ways to do this and address all these challenges.

This year, the Parliament is launching an initiative report by the two Co-Presidents of my election democracy group, Mr. Tobin and Mr. Mcallister. They are chairs of the foreign affairs

committee and development committee. We will launch this debate and resolution on the future of democracy support and election observation in a bid to really push other institutions to understand that it is really the moment to rethink the way we work. The last methodology of election observation is from the year 2000. So, for me there's also a margin of manoeuvre and improving the links between us as observers and you as providers of electoral assistance.

So, this is my message to you. Thank you for this opportunity and I'm happy that now you can all go to lunch.

Victoria Florinder



Thank you, Cristina.

I'm just going to sum up a couple of your key points and then we will indeed let everybody go to lunch that is served just across the hall.

Success can be achieved, but it's relative. So, for how long will success really last? The two communities – mediation and elections – they're certainly two different communities, however, they should meet because they inevitably will be on ground, therefore better to be prepared. Invest in EMBs as they are centrally located and their capacity is never a waste. The lack of follow up on recommendations can sometimes even delegitimise the practice itself. So, it is very important and there the practitioner community has a role to play. Also, an acknowledgment of the constraints when you observe your own members. And finally, which may sum up all the contributions today is that there's still a lot of work to do together. Identifying, understanding each other's comparative advantage and complement the role and value of the technical expertise deployed. So, I think ECES and the wider practitioner community should also really develop new pathways to embody and drive electoral assistance forward, which seems to be very much needed. Thank you very much. Enjoy your lunch.

BIOGRAPHIES OF THE SPEAKERS



Romano Prodi, President of the Foundation for Worldwide Cooperation, Former UN Special Envoy for the Sahel, Former Italian Prime Minister and Former President of the European Commission. Mr. Prodi holds a Law Degree from the Catholic University of Milan and advanced degrees in Industrial Economics from the universities of Milan, Bologna, and the London School of Economics. Romano Prodi has been Visiting Professor at Harvard University and Stanford Research Institute. His academic career began at the Department of Economics and at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Bologna, where he worked as an assistant professor (1963), associate professor (1966) and professor (1971-1999) of industrial organisation and industrial policy. From 1974 to 1978 he was chairman of the publishing house Società Editrice Il Mulino. In 1981, he founded Nomisma, a leader in Italian economic consultation, and chaired its Scientific Committee until 1995. He was also the editor of the Italian journal *L'Industria - Rivista di economia e politica industriale* for many years. From 1978 to 1979 Mr. Prodi served as the Italian Minister of Industry, and from 1982 to 1989 he served as Chairman of the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction (IRI), at the time Italy's largest holding company. Under his chairmanship, IRI underwent far-reaching reorganization, embarking on a process of change and preparing its subsidiaries for privatisation. Mr. Prodi was called back to the helm of IRI in May 1993 and successfully saw through the privatisation of large companies such as Credito Italiano and Banca Commerciale Italiana.

In February 1995 he founded the Ulivo centre-left coalition, which appointed him as its candidate for Prime Minister in the 1996 elections. Ulivo won the general elections in 1996 and the Prodi Government remained in office until 1998. One of its achievements was to secure Italy's place among the first countries to adopt the euro. In 1999 he was appointed President of the European Commission by the European Council, a position that he held until 2004. Shortly before the end of his term as President of the European Commission, Mr. Prodi returned to national Italian politics and successively led his centre-left coalition to the electoral campaign preceding the election, eventually won, and becoming again Prime Minister. From July 2008 to 2010 he has been named Chairman of the United Nations-African Union High-level Panel for Peacekeeping in Africa. From October 2012 to January 2014, he was Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel. He is Honorary Fellow of the

London School of Economics and Political Science (1989), and an Honorary Member of the Real Academia de Ciencias Morales y Politicas, Madrid (1997). In May 1999 he was awarded the Schumpeter Prize of the Schumpeter Society, Vienna. He also holds several honorary degrees from around the world. From February 2009 to December 2013, he was Professor at-large at Brown University (USA). From 2010 to November 2015, he was Professor of CEIBS (China Europe International Business School) in Shanghai and now he is Member of the Board of the same School.



Marina Sereni is the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy. Sereni has had a long political career, beginning with her election to the Umbria Regional Council, her region, in 1985. She served as a Counselor for the budget, personnel, and social policy from 1993 until 2001. She was initially elected to Parliament in 2001 in the Umbria seat, and in December of that year she became a member of the Democrats of the Left's national secretariat, as head of international relations until 2005. In the same year, she was appointed organizational officer and played a role in the formation of the Italian Partito Democratico (PD). Until 2006, she was a member of the Foreign and Community Affairs Commission. As the leader of her region in the early 2008 elections, she was appointed Vice-Chairwoman of the PD group until November 2009. She ran as a PD candidate in the Umbria constituency in the 2013 elections, and she was elected Deputy Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies on March 21. She also serves on the Foreign and Community Affairs Commission. From July 2018 until September 2019, she was a member of the PD's National Secretariat. Currently, she is a member of the PD's National Executive Committee. She has served as the Conte II government's Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation since September 16, 2019, and the Draghi government's Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation since March 1, 2021.



Emanuela Claudia del Re (born 6 December 1963) is an Italian politician and sociologist who has been serving as European Union Special Representative (EUSR) for the Sahel since 2021. From 2018 to 2021, she was a member of the Chamber of Deputies, serving as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in the government of Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte. A sociologist and expert in international politics, Del Re is a specialist in migration

and refugees, conflicts, religious issues, minorities. Since 1990 she has conducted intense field research - supported by prestigious institutions - in conflict areas, in particular the Balkans, the Caucasus, Africa, and the Middle East, where she has witnessed social and political crises and the voice of populations, especially of the victims. Earlier in her career, Del Re was a researcher and professor of Sociology of political phenomena at the International telematic university "UniNettuno", she taught for years at the Faculty of Communication Sciences of the "La Sapienza" University of Rome, where she was also "Jean Monnet" Professor with a teaching funded by the European Commission on European citizenship and governance. From 1997 to 2000 she was a researcher at the European University Institute and research fellow at "La Sapienza" University of Rome (2001-2003). She also taught a class in "decision-making" at Link Campus University. In 2017 Del Re was elected National Coordinator of the Sociology of Religion Section of the Italian Sociology Association (AIS) with which she launched the "Mondoreligioni" festival. Del Re founded the EPOS Intl. Agency of which was president until 2017. From 2012, she also conducted intervention projects with the European Commission and others for the reconstruction of civil society in conflict zones (Iraq, Jordan). She also worked as an international electoral observer for the UN, OSCE, and the EU.



Christina Kokkinakis is the Director for Values and Multilateral Relations/ Deputy Managing Director of Managing Directorate Global. She has 26 years of experience in foreign policy and multilateral diplomacy with the European Union and the United Nations. Ms Kokkinakis served as Ambassador of the Austrian Permanent Representation to the EU from August 2019 to January 2022. She served as the permanent representative of Austria to the

Political and Security Committee (PSC) of the Council of the European Union. Kokkinakis is the former head of the EEAS political section – human rights at the EU Delegation to the United Nations in Geneva and has previously held several positions at the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including as director for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and for COREPER I. Kokkinakis is a recipient of the Greek Order of the Phoenix.



Erastus J.O. Mwencha is currently the Chair of the ACBF Executive Board. He was previously the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC). During his time at the AUC, he oversaw the administration and finance of the Commission as its Controlling Officer, supervised the development of two AUC Strategic Plans (2009-12) and (2012-17) and participated in the development of Africa's long-term vision of Agenda 2063. He also developed institutional cooperation between the World Bank and the African Union, leading to the roll out of the successful Institution and Capacity Building Program for the AU and implemented the Joint Support Office for the Secretariat for the partnership of ECA, AFDB and the AUC. Before joining the African Union Commission, he was the Secretary General of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) from May 1998 to April 2008 where he previously served in various capacities including Acting Secretary General, Director of Industry, Energy and Environment and Senior Industrial Expert. At COMESA, Mwencha was instrumental in leading COMESA into becoming the first regional body on the continent to achieve a Free Trade Area (COMESA FTA) in 2000. He represented the region in negotiating the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPAs) with European Union (EU), the Doha Round of the World Trade Organization, as well as in promoting the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) for the benefit of the region's stakeholders. Prior to COMESA, Mwencha also served the Ministry of Industry of the Government of Kenya as Head of Industrial Promotion Department and Secretary to Industrial Sciences Advisory Research Committee (ISARC) and the Kenyan Industrial Survey and Promotion Centre as a Senior Economist. Mr Mwencha graduated from the University of York.



Gilbert Badjilembayéna Bawara has a solid university and academic background, in particular a post-graduate diploma in law from the University of Geneva (Switzerland), and extensive experience in international institutions, particularly in the United Nations system and in development cooperation. He has a rich political career in his country, Togo. For more than a decade, he has held numerous positions and responsibilities within the Togolese government, covering various fields such as international cooperation, development planning, territorial administration, decentralisation and local authorities, the civil service, administrative reforms, labour and social dialogue. He has also worked in the Cabinet of the President of the Republic, led or participated in numerous political and conflict resolution initiatives and

missions. During his career, notably within the United Nations, Gilbert B. Bawara has participated in numerous fact-finding missions and investigations on human rights and humanitarian law, as well as in mediation and political talks. He is the author of several articles and contributions in legal and specialized journals. In this capacity, he has given numerous lectures and conferences and participated in various seminars, debates and symposia on human rights and international humanitarian law, peacekeeping missions, political transitions in Africa, conflict resolution and reconciliation processes, including at the Universités Libre de Belgique.



Stefano Manservisi is Adjunct Professor at the EUI School of Transnational Governance and at Sciences-Po/Paris School for International Affairs. Manservisi is Special Advisor to Commissioner Paolo Gentiloni and Chair of the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF). He is a lawyer by training (Universities of Bologna and Paris I) and has served for the European Union for more than 35 years. He was Head of Cabinet to Mario Monti (Commissioner for Internal Market, taxation, customs and competition), to Romano Prodi (President of the European Commission) and lastly to Federica Mogherini (High Representative for Foreign Policy/Vice President of the Commission). Previously, he was Director-General for Development and political relations with Africa, Caribbean and Pacific, then Director-General for Migration and Home affairs and finally EU Ambassador to Turkey (2014). His last position has been Director-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO), recently renamed in DG International Partnerships.



Calixte Aristide Mbari is currently the Ag. Director, Governance and Conflict Prevention Directorate, and Head of the Democracy, Elections and Constitutionalism Division in the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Mr. Mbari Calixte Aristide joined the African Union in April 2008. He also worked for the United Nations for eight years, first as a human rights officer, then as an electoral expert in the Central African Republic, Burundi and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. A former parliamentarian in his country, the Central African Republic, he also served for many years as a member of the Independent National Electoral Commission and as a key player in civil society at the national,

sub-regional and African regional levels. He holds advanced degrees in international law, political science, human rights and conflict management from the University of Nantes and the University of Paris 1 Sorbonne in France and the University of Uppsala in Sweden.



Sonya Reines-Djivanides is the Executive Director of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), a position she started in April of 2015. She has more than fifteen years of experience in international conflict resolution and works, in her current role, towards peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict.

Prior to serving as the Executive Director, she was the chair of the EPLO steering committee for a year and a half. From 2013 until 2015 she was the Director of Search for Common Ground's (SFCG) Brussels Headquarters managing European fundraising, liaison, advocacy and programme development and support and before that she led SFCG's Track II Mediation work for seven years based in Washington D.C. with extensive travel. Sonya brings a great deal of educational background to these roles. She has a Bachelor of Arts, cum laude, in Political Science and French from the University of New Mexico. She has a Master of Arts in International Relations with focus on International Conflict Negotiation and an advanced Certificate in International Conflict Management from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University. In addition to these degrees, she completed a Peace Mediation Course with the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs and undertook further training at the United States Institute of Peace in post conflict reconstruction, conflict analysis and international mediation. Sonya is a skilled and experienced facilitator and manager with a proven ability to build successful, high performing cohesive teams. She has an exceptional ability to communicate and network effectively with a diversity of high-level personalities and strong analytical capabilities and a keen ability to solve problems creatively.



Charles Goerens is a member of the European Parliament's Renew Europe Group and the Luxembourgish Parti democratique. He is a member of the Constitutional Affairs Committee and its Vice-Chair. Since 2009, he has served on the Development Committee and the Subcommittee on Human Rights, as well as the Delegation to the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly. He is also a member of the

CARIFORUM-EC EPA, which adheres to the principles and objectives of the Cotonou Agreement signed in 2000 and is critical for economic development, poverty reduction, and the progressive integration of ACP governments into the global economy. He has also been on the Development Committee since 2012. In this context he was the Rapporteur for the proposal to approve a regulation of the European Parliament and the Council creating the Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument as a member of the Development Committee.



Cristina Castagnoli with over 20 years of experience in the EU institution working for both the European Commission and the European Parliament she is currently the Head of Unit of the Election Observation and Follow-up Unit. In her years in this position, she participated to several Electoral Observation Missions of the European Parliament in countries like: Peru, Iraq, Mozambique, and Lebanon among others. In her work at the parliament, she follows all the EU- EOMs of the Parliament and the work of the Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG). She was member of the cabinet of the HRVP Catherine Ashton where she cured all the relations with the parliament, the Electoral Observation missions, and the Inter-institutional issues. She cured several publications on the topic of elections, parliamentary diplomacy, and the role of the EU institutions.



Monica Frassoni is the President of ECES. Monica is an Italian politician who became actively involved in the European Federalist Movement in 1983 and was elected as the European General Secretary of the European Organisation of Young Federalists ("JEF") in 1987. From 1991 to 1993 she continued to follow youth policies as President of the European Co-ordinating Bureau of Youth'NGOs. From 1990 until the European Parliament (EP) elections in 1999, she worked for the Green/EFA Group in the EP as an advisor on institutional issues, internal rules and immunity. Working in this environment she concentrated on fighting for a democratic constitution for the European Union by championing the cause of European citizenship and fundamental rights. She was elected member of the EP in Belgium, as part of the Belgian Green Party (ECOLO). In the European elections of June 2004, she was re-elected to the EP with the Italian Greens. Frassoni was member of the Committee on Legal Affairs and of the Delegation for relations with Mercosur.

From 2002 to 2009, she was the Co-President of the Green/EFA Group in the EP, together with Daniel Cohn-Bendit. From October 2009 until 2019, she has been the co-President of the European Green Party with Rheinhard Buetikofer. Frassoni was appointed Chief Observer for the EU Election Observation Missions in Venezuela 2006 and Bolivia 2006 by the former EU Commissioner for External Relations, Ferrero-Waldner. In December 2010, she along with Cécile Duflot, Renate Künast, and Marina Silva were named in "Foreign Policy" magazine's list of 100 top global thinkers of 2010 for taking Green mainstream. Monica Frassoni contributed to the following electoral related reports: European Union Election Observation Mission - Bolivia 2009 - Final Report (2009); European Union Election Observation Mission - Presidential Elections, Venezuela 2006 - Final Report (2006).



Victoria Florinder is currently working as team leader for the European Resources for Mediation Support - ERMES III project managed by the College of Europe. ERMES enables the EU to aid conflict parties, third party mediators and groups participating in inclusive peace processes, in the context of local, national or international armed conflicts, or for preventive purposes. Victoria has previously worked for the European Center for Electoral Support as a program manager, senior conflict management expert and has been deployed to Madagascar, Tanzania, Jordan, Kosovo, South Africa and Ukraine for several years. Victoria is a knowledgeable and committed mediation and dialogue expert, with over 12 years of experience in conflict resolution and election-related violence. Victoria has authored a trademarked education program for peace mediation in election processes and contributed to publications on the prevention of electoral violence through mediation. Victoria is well-established within the peace mediation community that works globally and has been entrusted to contribute as an advisor to a number of organizations and foundations. She is a recurring lecturer for the Swedish Foreign Ministry's diplomatic program and the College of Europe's intensive summer training program on the EU's role in peace mediation.



Fabio Bargiacchi is the ideator and the founder of ECES. He is a member of ECES' Management Board and has been serving as Executive Director of ECES' Management Unit since July 2011. Over the last 11 years in this position he, together with his colleagues and collaborators, have led ECES to become one of the four most important electoral assistance providers for

implementing projects funded by the EU and EU Member States. ECES is nowadays recognised as one of the most important electoral assistance actors globally, along with UNDP, IDEA, OSCE, IFES, NDI and IRI. As Founder-Executive Director, he led ECES to obtain the TRACE and ISO 9001 certifications for its financial and quality management standards having implemented activities in over 50 countries mostly, but not only limited to Africa and the Middle East. He has played and maintains a strategic role in resource mobilisation and supervision of all activities which has resulted in ECES' funding coming mainly from the EU and its Member States as well as other donor agencies. Fabio also led ECES to obtain an important number of copyrighted certificates including innovative methodological tools for the implementation of ECES' strategy, called the "European Response to Electoral Cycle Support" (EURECS), of which he is the main author. Fabio's work in the elections field dates to the early 1990s. In the period 1997-2004 he held a variety of posts in the field of electoral assistance and observation with the EU, the UN and the OSCE. He operated for long term assignments in countries such as Central African Republic, Zimbabwe, West Bank and Gaza, Zambia, Kenya, Nigeria, Haiti, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo Suriname and Indonesia where he worked as Senior Election Operations Expert, Training/Reporting Advisor and Coordinator of EU Election Observers, among other senior positions. Fabio also developed a deep knowledge in project cycle management, particularly in the Democratic Governance field as explicitly shown by his experience working for the European Commission at the Delegation of the EU in Maputo (Mozambique) from 2001 to 2003 and at the EU Headquarters (European Commission, EuropeAid) in Brussels between 2004 and 2006 as Election Specialist. From January 2007 to December 2010, Fabio served as Coordinator of the "Joint EC UNDP Task Force on Electoral Assistance" (JTF) and Senior Electoral Assistance Advisor at the UN/UNDP Brussels Office. During this period, he contributed to the establishment of the same Joint Task Force and oversaw its activities for the identification, formulation and support for the implementation of all the EC-UNDP electoral assistance projects. From October 2004 to December 2006, he worked as Election Specialist at the Directorate for Operations Quality Support of the EuropeAid and he was the coordinator and main author of the "EU Methodological Guide on Electoral Assistance". Considering his experiences with OSCE, UN/UNDP, EU and ECES, Fabio has dealt with electoral and democratisation processes in over 60 different countries and worked on the identification, formulation, implementation or evaluation of more than 100 electoral assistance projects since 1997.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation



with the patronage of:



In collaboration with:

African
Union



Sant'Anna
School of Advanced Studies – Pisa



facebook.com/eces.eu



[@eces.eu](https://www.instagram.com/@eces.eu)



[@ECESeu](https://www.twitter.com/@ECESeu)



[youtube.com/user/ECESeu](https://www.youtube.com/user/ECESeu)

www.eces.eu