



The Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in collaboration with the Kenyan Section of the International Commission of Jurists convened the 2014 Annual Jurists' conference on the theme "Implementing Africa's New Constitutions: Opportunities, Prospects and Challenges," in Cape Town, South Africa between November 18th and 22nd 2014.

The conference sought to interrogate the implementation of the recently adopted Constitutions by African countries with particular emphasis on the constitutions of Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Whereas Kenyan and South African constitutions have been regarded among the most progressive constitutions, this conference sought to re-examine the extent to which they were upheld and respected by all with particular emphasis on the accountability mechanisms and the respect for human rights.

The conference interrogated selected issues on electoral experiences and electoral justice, freedom of Information, women rights and international criminal justice with the aim of establishing the role of constitutionalism, accountability, public participation, protection of human rights and adherence to the rule of law in ensuring greater democracy and stability in these countries and Africa as a whole. Constitution-making processes such as the one in Tanzania was also discussed.

It was clear from the presentations and the subsequent discussions that there existed a gap between the text and practice as far as constitutional implementation in Africa was concerned. In this regard, participants were made aware that constitutions do not make societies work but rather societies make constitutions work. Therefore, it was the responsibility of every citizen, more so jurists to ensure that constitutional aspirations as stipulated in the various texts were realized.

The conference brought together jurists (comprising of judges and practicing lawyers), members of parliament, human rights activists and scholars from Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Nigeria.

Among the key speakers at the conference were Justice Johann Kriegler and Justice Albie Sachs who both served in South Africa's first Constitutional Court and have been involved in several constitutional reform initiatives in South Africa and the larger African continent. Others included Prof. Shadrack Gutto, Director of the African Renaissance Studies, University of South Africa; Hon. Eddie Cross, MP, Zimbabwe; Dr. George Mukundi, head of the African Governance Architecture Secretariat, Department of Political Affairs of the African Union.