

**ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY IN POLITICAL PROCESSES, FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: LESSONS FOR AFRICA**  
**24<sup>TH</sup> – 27<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2015,**  
**SWAHILI BEACH HOTEL, UKUNDA, KENYA**



Various stakeholders from Africa gathered at the Annual Jurists' Conference 2015 that was held in Ukunda, Kwale County.

The Conference organized jointly by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, the Kenyan Section of the International Commission of Jurists and the National Gender Equality Commission sought to contribute towards gender equality in political processes by exploring the various practical steps that each member of the society can play towards promoting women participation in political processes.

It was widely noted that Africa as a whole was making steady progress in this area but there was a lot of room for improvement for its full realisation. In the Kenyan context, it was pointed out that gender equality is already enshrined in the Constitution and provided for in many other legislative frameworks but its implementation remained a big challenge. Therefore, the challenge for Kenya was to move from formulation of more legislative and policy frameworks and abstract commitments, to the actual implementation of what is in existence.

The conference brought together state and non-state political and electoral policy-makers, members of parliament, judges, lawyers, scholars and civil society representatives. Various issues were tackled under numerous themes including but not limited to, the review of the

theoretical and historical perspective of gender representation in Africa; electoral systems and processes as mechanisms for achieving representation; review of the emerging trends and opportunities for representative democracy in Africa; status and lessons learnt in the implementation of gender equality; the necessary legal, institutional and administrative frameworks; the role of key institutions (including the judiciary, electoral commissions, political parties etc) in fostering democracy and enhancing gender parity in political representation. First-hand experiences of some of the present and past female members of parliament and a former presidential candidate in Kenya was the highlight of the conference.

Dr. Maureen Mwanawasa, former first lady of the Republic of Zambia and a women rights crusader in Africa delivered the keynote speech at the official opening of the conference. Other notable speakers included Hon. Martha Karua, presidential candidate in Kenya's 2013 elections, Commissioner Winfred Lichuma, Chairperson of the National Gender and Equality Commission, Prof. Patricia Kameri-Mbote, to mention but a few.

It was apparent from the deliberations that the will to achieve gender parity in political representation vests in both genders and it requires their concerted efforts to attain it. This was well captured by Dr. Maureen Mwanawasa, who said *'as a woman you possess the key to a better gender balance, but men have the lock and must have the courage to release it'*.