



# DDP & MVC POLITICAL SUMMIT 2019 : Electoral Accountability in Africa

DDP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DR PAUL KARIUKI AND MY VOTE COUNTS DIRECTOR JOEL BREGMAN WITH SPEAKERS AT A POLITICAL SUMMIT HELD AT ELANGENI HOTEL.

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## Elections, Electoral Accountability and Youth Participation in Africa

By **Lizeka Maduna**

**A**s 24 countries across Africa will be holding elections this year, the Democracy Development Program in partnership with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and My Vote Counts hosted a political summit aimed at exploring electoral accountability in an African context.

The DDP with My Vote Counts' two-day event held at Elangeni Hotel in Durban on July 10 saw parliamentary members from various countries as representatives, the youth, activists and civil society organizations come together to tackle pertinent issues concerning elections and electoral accountability in Africa.

"Unfortunately, many of our past elections have been mired in controversy. Research indicates that more than half of Africa's ongoing conflicts are a result of claims over legitimacy which poses a massive security risk.



**Above: COPE KZN member, Pastor Gavin, asking questions after a panel discussion.**

Although some African countries have made strides in the consolidation of their electoral democracies, studies reveal that the threat to electoral integrity is greater in Africa than it is anywhere else in the world. Furthermore, many countries have suffered from political violence, capture of state institutions, militarization and a deeper entrenchment of autocracy," DDP said via a spokesperson.

In South Africa alone, political tensions have been a major issue over the past years. Last year, the

former premier of KwaZulu-Natal Willies Mchunu released a report which investigated the killings. It found "serious weaknesses" in the criminal justice and intelligence systems, which contributed to the fact that most perpetrators of these conspiracies and murders never face justice.

In its discussion, the summit raised a question of accountability and how it could be affected.

According to Denis Kadima, the executive director of the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA), there are several approaches to exploring accountability and who should be held accountable and how.

"There's an academic perspective whereby when they talk about electoral accountability, they look at how voters sanction incumbents through periodic elections; it's more complex.



**Above: DDP Executive Director, Dr Paul Kariuki, with panelists, from left ACCORD'S Matthew Kimble, Lesotho MP Alice Mosothane, Kenyan Politician Boniface Mwangi, Tanzanian Ruth Mollé and MVC Director, Joel Bregman.**

“The second approach is much more centered around the electoral management body which is normally called electoral commissions. So, in this perspective we look at how electoral commissions account to the voters, how they work and how they can be held accountable,” he said.

In the first approach, Kadima says it's more about looking at the performance of the government and voters' behavioral patterns.

“It's the means voters hold politicians accountable through periodic elections and this is seen from the perspective of voter behavior. Most of the time it's based on economic performance of regime, so people look at the living conditions and decide,” he said.

Meanwhile the discourse was more centered around electoral accountability and its dynamics, young people raised concerns about electoral illiteracy in a South African context among young people...[read more here](#)

**The conference was a collaborative effort by My Vote Counts and DDP and was attended by youth from around the KZN province, civil society organizations, political parties, the media and DDP partners.**



**Above: Chereze Thakur, Executive Director of Good Governance Africa, Dr Ola Bello from Nigeria, KAS's Michaela Braun and Executive Director of EISA Denis Kadima on a discussion about alternative mechanisms of accountability.**



**Above: Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) CEO, Mr. Simon Mamabolo and DDP Executive Director, Dr Paul Kariuki, invested in a conversation.**

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