

**REPUBLIC OF KENYA**



**TWELFTH PARLIAMENT**

**THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**REMARKS BY THE HON. JUSTIN B. N. MUTURI, E.G.H, M.P SPEAKER  
OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

Delivered during the official closing of the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Continental Forum of Election Management Bodies, held at Crowne plaza hotel, Nairobi, 29<sup>th</sup> November, 2019

- **Dr. Khabele Matlosa, Director of Political Affairs, African Union Commission**
- **Mr. Wafula Chebukati, Chairman, The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission of Kenya**
- **H.E Amb. Minata Samate Cessouma, Commissioner for Political Affairs, African Union Commission**
- **Invited Delegates**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Good evening all!

It is my great pleasure to be here at the moment, on the closure of this 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Continental Forum of Election Management Bodies.

I commend the African Union Commission (AUC) and the Association of African Electoral Authorities (AAEA) for organizing this important event.

Internal displacement of communities, refugees and election management has been a challenge to many African countries and urgent strategic initiatives are long overdue to ensure that we attain peaceful, democratic, secure and developed democracies.

Africa hosts more than one-third of the world's refugees and internally displaced persons, many of whom are fleeing ongoing conflicts in Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Sudan and the Central African Republic.

This growing phenomenon impacts not only those fleeing conflict borne Countries, but also the host communities and countries who now face complex logistical and humanitarian challenges.

**The theme “Enhancing Participation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Refugees in Elections in Africa: Towards More Inclusive Electoral Processes”** Is therefore an important and critical theme for Africa's electoral processes.

### **Distinguished Delegates**

Refugee flows are a symbol of the crises which afflict many societies in Africa. In particular, most of the refugee flows are the result of armed conflicts and civil strife.

It is the result of ethnic intolerance that include abuse of human rights on a massive scale and the monopolization of political and economic power and the refusal to respect democracy or the results of free and fair elections.

This resistance to popular participation in governance and poor management of public affairs all play a part in forcing people to flee their normal places of residence.

Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees face multiple risks and high degree of vulnerability. They often face difficulties in accessing health care, housing, education and employment. They may become easy targets for abuse, extortion and exploitation due to a lack of a protective family network, lack of information or missing documents.

Many suffer accidents or illness and cannot benefit from medical care while some lose contact with their families. It is a critical public problem that requires coordinated and ambitious solutions at local, regional and global levels.

### **Distinguished Delegates**

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) and Refugees in Africa are eligible voters and potential candidates. This therefore complicates the conduct of inclusive elections, which if not carefully managed further exacerbate the political dis-enfranchisement, exclusion, and marginalization of an already aggrieved cohort of people.

The objective this forum was geared towards putting in place measures that address the root causes of forced displacements in Africa and attaining sustainable solutions that generate innovative elections management strategies fit for environments characterized by internal displacements of persons and refugees.

The output of this forum will wield enormous and profound implications for democracy and political rights on the African continent.

Inclusive electoral processes are key to durable solutions of Africa's growing displacement crisis. Addressing Africa's conflicts in a sustainable manner invariably requires tackling the root causes of conflicts.

Improved democratic governance through inclusive electoral processes serves as a collective response to conflict prevention, crisis management and the need for development.

## **Distinguished Delegates**

National and international laws which guarantee and promote an equal opportunity to vote and be elected, apply equally to IDPs as citizens of the state.

Often, however, IDP populations can be perceived by politicians as a threat who at times fear that IDP participation could alter constituency electorates and change election outcomes.

Given these operational and political complexities, the onus is primarily on states to take measures to enable IDPs' electoral participation.

The participation of IDPs and refugees in elections is a human right enshrined in numerous international and regional instruments.

Failure to take intentional and special measures amounts to human rights violation, which can be a source of further instability and displacement.

On the other hand, guaranteeing public participation is integral to the fulfilment of broader legal obligations for refugees and IDPs protection.

There is no doubt that this forum provided a platform for participants to:-

- a) Enhance understanding of the relationship between democratic governance and the problem of IDPs and refugees in Africa;
- b) Assess and spotlight the marginalization of IDPs and refugees in elections; and
- c) To explore strategies for enhancing participation of IDPs and refugees in elections.

The outcome of this important forum will be yet another milestone in strengthening the democratization of African countries.

I encourage you to ensure the implementation of all agreed upon action points of this Nairobi forum to the letter.

## **In conclusion Distinguished delegates**

I wish to highlight that national authorities have the primary duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons and refugees within their jurisdiction.

They must establish conditions, as well as provide the means, which allow internally displaced persons to return voluntarily, in safety and with dignity, to their homes or places of habitual residence, or to resettle voluntarily in another part of the country.

The reintegration of returned or resettled internally displaced persons in post-conflict situations, political participation can effectively contribute to peace, reconstruction, and long-term development.

Protecting the civil and political rights of displaced people, the right to vote, to freedom of assembly and association, and of expression, allows displaced persons to play an active role in shaping their own future and that of their nation.

I commend all of you for making this forum a success.

**It is now my Honor and Privilege to Declare this 6<sup>TH</sup> Annual Continental Forum of Election Management Bodies Officially Closed.**

**I Thank you.**

