



Congressional Testimony

Democracy Support Strategies in Africa

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Introduction

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, and Members of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations, thank you for this opportunity to testify on the most effective preparations for and interventions in African elections, and how the US government can be more effective in supporting democracy and governance on the continent.

Established in April 1983, IRI is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization committed to advancing freedom and democracy worldwide by helping political parties to become more issue-based and responsive, assisting citizens to participate in government planning, and working to increase the role of marginalized groups in the political process – including women and youth. IRI has conducted programs in more than 100 countries and, along with our Women’s Democracy Network (WDN) and Arab Women’s Leadership Institute (AWLI), is currently active in more than 85 countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, IRI works in the Central African Republic, Cote d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Somalia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

Several initiatives complement IRI’s work in Africa, including Generation Democracy and WDN, our global programs to increase youth and women political participation, and IRI’s newly established centers of excellence – the Center for Applied Learning and Global Initiatives and the Center for Insights in Survey Research. IRI’s work in Africa also benefits from its diverse International Advisory Council (IAC), which includes African luminaries Mo Ibrahim, founder of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, and John Kufuor, president of Ghana (2001-2009), and renowned US development professionals such as Paula J. Dobriansky, former undersecretary of state for Democracy and Global Affairs (2001-2009).

Additionally, IRI is a member of the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS). Established in 1995, CEPPS pools the expertise of the three organizations represented here today – IRI, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI). The Consortium also includes the American Bar Association’s Rule of Law Initiative, the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, Internews, and Search for Common Ground among others. CEPPS differs from many development actors by maintaining long-term relationships with political parties, election management bodies, parliaments, civil society organizations and democracy activists.

Democracy and Elections in Africa

Africa is a continent on the move. It has posted impressive economic growth numbers in recent years with the GDP of the 11 largest sub-Saharan countries, according to Bloomberg data, growing by 51 percent over the last decade. This is more than twice the expansion rate of the global economy at 23 percent and almost four times the US economy at 13 percent. Many of Africa’s economies are striving to diversify and thus become less dependent on foreign aid and single commodity exports. Technological innovation has connected Africans

like never before, improved agriculture and energy production, and enhanced government service delivery. Reduced infant mortality rates, stronger health care systems, successful vaccination campaigns, and sustained fertility rates have contributed to Africa boasting the youngest population on the planet. According to UNFPA, the UN's population division, half of its residents are under the age of 19 and Africa's population will continue to grow for some time, accounting for half the world's population and a workforce of one billion people by 2050. Sub-Saharan Africa's economy stands to benefit from a potential demographic dividend of \$500 billion per year (equal to one-third of the continent's GDP) for up to 30 years.

On balance with this positive news are some worrying trends. In several sub-Saharan African countries, we have recently seen presidents and their ruling parties benefit from either their overwhelming majorities in parliament or tight control of the political system and security apparatus to ensure that elections result in an extension of presidential terms well beyond their original mandate. While there have been recent historic and peaceful transfers of power in countries like Nigeria, current trends are worrying. They point to an uptick in cases of so called "third-termers" exceeding their original two-term mandate, like in Burundi and Congo-Brazzaville, and longer-term (or "lifetime presidents") in countries like Zimbabwe and Equatorial Guinea. Matters of insecurity are also a persistent threat to the democratic space in several countries. Terrorist attacks in countries like Kenya and Mali, the rise of foreign and homegrown extremist groups in places like Nigeria and Somalia, and internal conflicts on the continent like in South Sudan, create serious challenges to often fragile democratic institutions. African governments increasingly respond to these security challenges by imposing strong and often anti-democratic laws that undermine the very freedoms of the people the laws intend to protect. One major consequence is a closing of space for critical elements of a healthy democracy, like civil society, opposition political parties, and independent news media. In fact, in recent years Freedom House's annual rankings of political rights and civil liberties, *Freedom in the World*, has shown a downward trend in the number of sub-Saharan African countries rated as "Free" or "Partly Free." In 1990, 40 percent of countries met this designation, which peaked at 67 percent in 2000. As of 2014, sub-Saharan African countries considered "Free" or "Partly Free" contracted to 59 percent.

Despite these challenges and negative trends, Africans remain committed to democracy over other forms of government. According to a 2014 analysis of citizen attitude surveys conducted by Afrobarometer in 34 countries, seven in ten Africans prefer democracy, and the proportion of those rejecting alternatives rose steadily over the past decade. A significant development in recent decades is that elections, not coups, have become the standard way in which African leaders take power. While the quality and integrity of some elections are questionable, many countries' regular elections are largely free, fair, and considered democratic by international standards. Africans think so as well. According to Afrobarometer, seven in 10 African citizens across 28 countries view their elections as "completely free and fair" or "free and fair with minor problems." Also of note is the rate by which Africans, particularly young Africans, participate in elections, which is often much higher than in the West – at least 25 sub-Saharan African countries recorded voter turnouts of over 50 percent in their last election.

On March 20, of this year, Africans experienced their own version of Super Tuesday. Dubbed "Super Sunday," millions of voters across the sub-continent headed to the polls in six countries - Benin, Cape Verde, Congo-Brazzaville, Niger, Zanzibar, and Senegal - for key elections. Notable was Benin, where incumbent president Thomas Boni Yayi did not attempt to serve beyond his original mandate resulting in a new president for the country. This was not the case, however, in Congo-Brazzaville, where two-term President Denis Sassou Nguesso ran and won a third term following a controversial constitutional referendum. Also on Super Sunday was a divisive presidential vote in Niger, where incumbent President Mahamadou Issoufou won a second term under a boycott by the leading opposition candidate who made it to the second round of elections despite spending most of the campaign period in jail. A similar opposition boycott occurred in Zanzibar, where the main opposition party refused to participate in a re-run of the October 2015 elections that the Zanzibar Election Commission canceled to avoid what many believe would have been an opposition victory.

Recent elections also returned to power two long-serving African presidents, Uganda's Yoweri Museveni and Equatorial Guinea's Teodoro Mbasogo - who have served as their nation's president since 1986 and 1979 respectively. Currently five African heads of state have been ruling their countries for 20 years or more. Looking ahead to the rest of 2016 and 2017, we expect important presidential elections in Ghana, the Gambia, and Kenya. Africa watchers are also keenly monitoring developments in the Democratic Republic of Congo where delays of presidential elections, last occurring in 2011, continue despite the fact that President Joseph Kabila will reach his presidential term limit in December 2016. Increasing protests regarding the timing and conduct of presidential elections, suppression of opposition figures, and closing civic space are concerning developments over the last twelve months. The situation in DRC affects the rest of the continent by virtue of its landmass and economic and political importance to the Great Lakes region.

The recent relative progress of regular, credible elections in important countries should not distract us from the immense work that remains to support the maturation and institutionalization of Africa's democracies. The West too often generalizes the success of democracy in Africa by the way in which countries conduct elections and transfer power. These are flawed and incomplete metrics. Democracies require much more than simply elections, and in fact, what happens between election years is arguably the most important indicator of democratic success.

The Importance of Electoral Support

While citizen understanding of democracy and the degree to which they apply democratic principles may differ from country to country, elections are a consistent feature in democracies and are the most tangible democratic act. When conducted regularly in a multiparty system, elections serve to institutionalize democratic norms by rewarding responsive and accountable governance by re-electing incumbents and sending poor performers home. There are several countries on the African continent where regular presidential and parliamentary elections occur, but their outcomes do not reflect the

democratic nature of the process. This often raises a question as to why the US government should provide assistance to an election process or system that is potentially unfair, less than free, and certainly not transparent, In other words, why do we support undemocratic elections?

The metrics of success for elections and election assistance unfortunately too often focus on the election outcome rather than on the impact that the practice has on the people within the political system. The regular practice of elections further inculcates democratic values by systematically activating ordinary people to participate in the democratic process. This collective effort to participate in the democratic exercise of elections ensures that the pursuit of democracy, no matter how messy or abhorrent, occurs uninterrupted. The role of international organizations like IRI in partnership with its donors, therefore, is to support and strengthen as best we can all actors in the democratic space. The desired change from elections assistance is not regime change as some of our detractors may claim, but rather helping our partners achieve governments elected through a free, fair, and transparent process. In many cases, the road to democracy is a marathon, not a sprint. Credible elections may not happen on the first, second or even the fifth attempt; but, as citizens become familiar with the act of voting, scrutinize the qualifications of candidates, connect the dots between government performance and elected leaders, and take ownership of and protect their right to vote, progress toward the institutionalization and maturation of democracy is undeniable.

The absence of regular and democratic elections provides an opening for increased political repression, citizen discontent, politically motivated violence and the pursuit of alternative means for selecting leaders – including regime change through coup d'états. In its *Freedom in the World 2015* report, Freedom House concludes, "antidemocratic practices lead to civil war and humanitarian crisis. They encourage the growth of terrorist movements, whose effects inevitably spread beyond national borders." The instability bred by politically repressive regimes in a region of strategic importance to the United States reinforces the interconnectedness of democracy assistance and US national security priorities.

Nigeria's 2015 elections are a good case study for effective U.S. democracy assistance. Since Nigeria's 1999 return to citizen rule, IRI and its CEPPS partners have implemented DRG programs, strengthening numerous actors in political and electoral processes, including the ruling and opposition parties, election management bodies, civil society, the media and, most importantly, voters. While presidential elections had been held three times prior, the selection of Nigeria's head of state was typically a negotiated settlement by elites within the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) more than a competitive process arbitrated by the ballot box on Election Day. As the 2015 elections approached, and after 16 years in power, PDP faced a real challenge from the opposition alliance, the All Progressives Congress (APC). Speculation was rampant as to the lengths incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan and PDP would take to hold on to power. In the end, Nigeria's March 2015 election, despite its shortcomings, resulted in the peaceful handover of power from incumbent President Jonathan to APC's Muhammadu Buhari. The importance of this outcome for Africa's most populous country cannot be overstated. Importantly, this peaceful transfer of power was not the result of a single election, but a series of regular and sustained electoral contests for president that enabled the system to mature and become more democratic over time. US

assistance and the CEPPS partners had an important role to play. One can ask, what would have been the outcome had IRI not provided APC, PDP, and other Nigerian political parties with years of political party strengthening support? What if the Independent National Elections Commission (INEC) had not received critical technical assistance from IFES, or if domestic observers and civil society had not received capacity building and support from NDI? Though we can never know the counter-factual, we can say with some certainty that the level, quality, and peaceful nature of the participation of various stakeholders would have been different.

Our Approach to DRG Programming Works

As a former country director for IRI's Kenya and East Africa programs, and former deputy country director for our programs in Egypt and South Sudan, I have personally worked in several of IRI's current and former program countries on the sub-continent, including Burundi, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Somaliland, Tanzania, and Uganda. I can speak firsthand about the impact IRI programs have made with the generous support of the American taxpayer through, among others, USAID, the National Endowment for Democracy and the US State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL). This assistance has helped fellow champions of democracy in these countries – whether from civil society, political parties or government – to hone their skills and ensure that the democratic system of government in their respective countries continues to progress. Furthermore, this work has assisted US foreign policy interests by making sure that vulnerable populations are aware of and exercise the democratic process as a viable alternative to violence, conflict, or authoritarianism.

At its core, DRG programming deals with political processes and political actors who have political motivations. As such, at the center of our approach is the development and maintenance of long-term relationships with government, political party and civil society stakeholders from the grassroots to the national level. We also invest in staff members who are both well-versed in the history and culture of the countries they work in and have extensive personal political experience to draw on in their assistance to our partners. Organizations like IRI, NDI and the other CEPPS partners have decades of experience thinking and working politically in dynamic and complex environments that require flexibility and the ability to provide our partners with advice and guidance that is adaptive to changing daily realities. With this long-term and comprehensive view toward DRG programming, we do not view our programs as simply a definitive set of deliverables, and we do not see the democratic processes as the collection of isolated components.

Where our entree into a country is often through elections, as was recently the case in the Central African Republic (CAR), IRI takes a proactive approach to rapidly starting operations and meeting emerging needs in coordination with our USG partners. For example, CAR's December 30, 2015, first round of national elections experienced significant logistical and administrative shortcomings that required immediate attention ahead of the second round of presidential elections and repeat legislative elections on February 14, 2016. At the request of the US Embassy, IRI identified critical needs of the National Elections Agency (ANE) to address through high-impact, short-term, and low-dollar interventions. This included

updating and launching the ANE's website so that election results could be posted and accessible to the public – enabling a level of transparency not available in the first round. In the days following the February 14 elections, more than 40,000 users visited the ANE website, an impressive feat considering CAR's limited internet penetration. IRI's local partners in Bangui further disseminated electoral information to their grassroots networks via SMS and other low-tech means.

Programming for the ANE complemented IRI's ongoing voter education efforts, which included live voter education events, broadcast nationwide by local radio partners, for Central African communities in most need of voter information, including in IDP camps and Bangui's PK5 – the predominantly Muslim neighborhood that has been at the center of the sectarian violence committed in CAR over the last year. The voter education and conflict mitigation programming provided by the CAR Elections Consortium, led by IRI with partners Internews and Mercy Corps funded by the U.S. Department of State, was among the limited financial and technical support for elections provided to CAR by the international community. We supported conflict-weary Central Africans to vote in five generally peaceful electoral processes in five months (the last occurring this past weekend) that ushered in a post-transition government for their country.

In Uganda, IRI has supported political party strengthening programs for more than a decade. External evaluations of IRI's work around the 2011 Ugandan elections conveyed the impact of IRI's assistance, citing evidence that IRI's program strengthened the environment for peaceful political competition, increased the organizational capacity of parties, improved constituent relations by parties, and increased Ugandans' confidence in their electoral system. IRI continued this work ahead of the 2016 elections by conducting coalition building and candidate training initiatives and providing technical assistance to the Free and Fair Election Campaign, a launching point for opposition party leaders to collaborate. While many challenges to Uganda's democratic development persist, opposition parties were the most unified they have ever been, uniting under The Democratic Alliance, to contest Uganda's February elections earlier this year.

As discussed previously, elections are only one piece of the democratic process. In the inter-election period, IRI often focuses its attention to working with elected officials to fulfill their roles in national legislatures and local governments and with civil society to advocate for citizen priorities and conduct government oversight. Effective local representation, vibrant civil society and accountable local leaders ensure that citizens remain connected to their government and do not seek out alternative, and possibly destructive, means to have their voices heard. IRI employs a hands-on, learn-by-doing approach that provides elected officials with replicable models for citizen engagement, service delivery, and policy development. For example, in Mali IRI worked with mayors in all eight regions of the country to systematically assess their five-year terms in office and help them communicate their efforts and results to their constituents. Citizens attended IRI-sponsored Restitution Days, where mayors presented the results of their end-of-term assessments and citizens asked questions and raised issues with their local elected officials. For many Malian citizens, this was their first ever interaction with their local government officials. Because of IRI's support, mayors reported an increase in citizen willingness to pay taxes, with one mayor reporting a

10 percent increase in tax revenue after Restitution Day. Furthermore, this engagement between citizens and their local leaders will better prepare them for when long-awaited local government elections finally occur.

In Somaliland, the self-declared independent but not internationally recognized territory in north-west Somalia, IRI supported the development of two issue-based caucuses in the House of Representatives from 2010-2014. Prior to the work of these caucuses, Somaliland's parliament could have been characterized as a "rubber stamp" for legislation drafted and promoted by the Executive. The lower house had little capacity for legislative research, drafting or debate, and lacked the ability to coalesce members around policy issues. Through a systematic program, IRI supported caucus members to conduct field visits to identify policy issues and ideas for addressing them, to gather feedback from citizens, and work in coordination with civil society to draft legislation. The House of Representatives passed the first of six bills drafted by IRI-supported caucuses – the Wildlife and Forestry Act - on January 5, 2015. Just last week, almost two years since the close of our program, we received word that the Health Caucus IRI helped initiate is preparing to officially submit an HIV/AIDS bill for parliamentary debate and passage after holding 45 working group meetings to discuss and prepare the legislation. As Somaliland moves toward elections next year, legislative committees and caucuses will be prepared to engage in review and debate of the existing electoral law. Americans are keenly aware of the need for stability and democracy in Somalia, the world's most notorious failed state. In other parts of the world, we see extremist groups taking advantage of power vacuums, and this has been the case with *al Shabaab* in Somalia for some time. As we have seen with Somaliland, which can be characterized as one of the most stable places in the Horn of Africa, citizens do not feel the need to join extremist groups or engage in violent confrontation when their needs are met and priorities addressed through democratic governance systems.

Challenging Environment for DRG Programming in Africa

Despite the good work that organizations like IRI and our CEPPS partners conduct around the world year after year, the environment we work in – concerning the political and operating context, funding levels and administrative landscape – continues to present substantial challenges.

Across the continent, citizens are more aware of their rights and the actions of their governments, newly adopted constitutions – including Kenya's 2010 constitution – are among the most progressive in the world, and women are serving in the highest offices of their countries and at impressive rates relative to advanced democracies. Rwanda boasts the highest level of women's representation in parliament in the world, at 68 percent, and seven African women have served as elected and appointed heads of state – notably including Liberia's Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and the Central African Republic's Catherine Samba-Panza. While there have been significant gains for democracy in sub-Saharan Africa since the independence movements of the 20th century, those that remain undemocratic are among the toughest and most fragile nations in the world. They grapple with protracted conflict, transnational migration, corruption, and leaders who, despite the outward appearance of being democratic, maintain their hold on power to the detriment of their people. It is in these high-risk and rapidly evolving environments that the flexibility, expertise and political

acumen of the democracy and governance practitioners at organizations like IRI are imperative.

Inconsistent Funding Across Electoral Cycle

IRI understands that elections are significant events in democratic societies. We also recognize that the fundamental democratic deficits in political systems lie in the day-to-day business of governments and their relationships with citizens and civil society. Authoritarian regimes rarely steal elections on Election Day; instead, they find more success manipulating the process in their favor in the years and months leading up to elections. Institutional weaknesses, an uninformed and disengaged citizenry, an uneven playing field for competition and repression of opposition groups contribute to this phenomenon.

Our experience shows that DRG funding for Africa ramps up in advance of elections. Of IRI's current USAID and State Department-funded programs in Africa, 80 percent focus substantially on support to electoral processes. In each case, funding for the inter-election period is uncertain. This is natural in a funding environment that is reactionary and event-focused. However, the democratic processes that occur between elections provide citizens with the benefits of democracy – equitable and responsive service delivery, the ability to pursue and advocate for individual interests and ideas, and engage in a two-way relationship with their government. When citizens understand the value of democracy to their daily lives, they are more inclined to defend their democracies against electoral and constitutional manipulation, corruption, extremist groups, and external threats. Long-term and consistent support for the development of strong institutions broadly bolsters government capacity to administer all democratic processes, including elections, and enables civil society and citizens to conduct effective oversight of government performance.

Where democracy assistance is limited to electoral processes, the funding often becomes available to implementers late in the pre-election period, and is rarely sufficient in scale. Just this year, the CEPPS partners mobilized elections programs with only a few months to work ahead of elections. For example, in Tanzania, CEPPS received funding in June 2015, only five months prior to the October elections, to provide support to traditional and new media coverage of elections, conduct voter education, and coordinate domestic observation. Similarly in Uganda, a country with historically controversial elections, the CEPPS partners received funding to minimize voter disenfranchisement in elections, improve electoral oversight and conduct civic education in late May 2015 for February 2016 elections. In both cases, DRG support in the post-election period has not yet been determined, though it is critically needed. Recent history in Uganda and Tanzania highlight this need. Last week Uganda's President Museveni was inaugurated to his fifth term. US, European Union and Canadian representatives walked out during the inauguration festivities also attended by Sudan's Omar al-Bashir and Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe. One day later, Ugandan opposition leader Kizza Besigye, who the government has detained regularly in recent months, was charged with treason. In Tanzania, growing democratic deficits – highlighted by the annulment of the October 2015 election results in Zanzibar and the March 2016 re-run – led the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) to suspend development of its \$472 million compact with the government. The occurrence of elections does not solely make democratic

societies, and the deep-seeded challenges to democracy in Africa must be addressed through sustained, long-term investment in DRG programs.

Overall Decline in DRG Funding for Africa

Over the last few years, IRI has experienced firsthand the realities of a challenging funding landscape. Support for DRG programs is a relatively small piece of the overall State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs budget; in FY16, DRG budget allocations accounted for only 4.7 percent (\$2.48 billion) of the total foreign assistance (\$52.68 billion) budget. Further, US government support for DRG programs fell by 38 percent between 2009 and 2015. Devex reports that approximately 20 percent of the reduction in DRG funding “has simply been lost to other priorities.” In Africa, the reduction is even starker, with actual DRG funding cut by 44 percent between 2010 and 2015, according to an analysis by InterAction. During this important juncture in Africa’s development, now is the time to reinforce our commitment to resilient democracies in Africa by funding democracy assistance programs at robust levels.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Mr. Chairman, I would like to commend you and the honorable members of this Committee for holding this hearing today and for giving me the opportunity to discuss the importance of DRG programming in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is as critical a time as ever to ensure that democracy takes root so that African nations remain important economic and security partners to the United States. As we look to the future of DRG support, I would like to take the opportunity to make the following recommendations:

- While support for elections is an important element of US government assistance to Africa, this assistance must be part of a broader DRG strategy characterized by a sustained funding commitment. Where the US provides elections support, funding must be allocated and dispersed in a timely manner to provide implementers and their programs sufficient time to achieve intended results.
- DRG support must be given with the understanding that the institutionalization of democracy is a long-term objective. There will be setbacks and missteps. It is during these times that agile, consistent, and even amplified support is most critical. We must be prepared to invest in democracy in Africa and in those practitioners who have the relationships, experience, and expertise to navigate dynamic political and operating environments.
- For DRG programs to ultimately have their intended impact, USAID must recognize that these programs are inherently different from other forms of assistance in other sectors, including health, education, and economic development. Support to political processes and actors must account for changing contexts, individual motivations and incentives, varying capacity levels and embrace their *political* nature.
- Selecting the appropriate procurement mechanism for DRG awards is an essential component to achieve impactful, sustainable results. Congress weighed in on this in the FY16 Consolidated Appropriations Act when it legislated that USAID shall implement civil society and political competition and consensus building programs abroad in a manner that recognizes the unique benefits of grants and cooperative agreements. USAID has

released a revised ADS Chapter 304 and we understand will be providing USAID employees with Amplifying Guidance on the applicability of ADS 304 to DRG awards. These documents provide needed clarification as to the criteria and process for choice of instrument decisions to ensure that USAID Missions choose the most appropriate mechanism for DRG programs. We commend USAID for taking action on this, and urge that USAID Missions implement the new regulations as intended, and that both USAID and Congress conduct strict oversight.

- Relatedly, we are concerned with an apparent trend in Africa for USAID to fund select traditional DRG projects through large pre-competes – primarily acquisition – mechanisms that are primarily focused on other development sectors such as infrastructure and food safety/poverty reduction initiatives. The effect appears to be fewer stand-alone traditional DRG projects, as well as limited opportunities for mission-driven NGO implementers, who have long-lasting relationships in challenging operating environments and are experts in adapting to dynamic political environments, from competitively applying for such funding opportunities.
- We must fully appreciate the link between failures of governance, refugee flows, and the draw of extremist groups like ISIS, al-Shabaab and Boko Haram across the continent. A secure and stable Africa is of paramount importance to the United States and our European allies. The development of functional and institutionalized democratic systems is the only way to ensure that, in the long term, African countries will be equipped to meet the needs and expectations of their rapidly growing citizenry, particularly as Africa's youth, born in the post-independence era, come of age and seek the economic opportunities, political freedoms and human rights offered in other parts of the world.

Democracy and governance programs are essential, and have never been more important in sub-Saharan Africa. Now is not the time to relent in our support to those on the continent who seek democracy over authoritarian rule. In his historic Westminster Speech to Members of the British Parliament on June 8, 1982, President Reagan said of democracies at the time: "Optimism comes less easily today, not because democracy is less vigorous, but because democracy's enemies have refined their instruments of repression. Yet optimism is in order, because day by day democracy is proving itself to be a not-at-all-fragile flower." President Reagan's words are still relevant today, especially in the case of many young African democracies, which continue to work toward transparent, accountable, and democratic political systems.

Thank you.