

Group II's work

Group two had a discussion on the following topics:

1. **Freedom of expression and diversity of opinion, and**
2. **Democracy, democratic transition and creation of citizen participation.**

I - SUMMARY

A- FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Regarding the first point, that is freedom of expression and diversity of opinion, most African countries have ratified the relevant international treaties and have incorporated them into national texts. This has made it possible for media houses to mushroom (FM radio, TV, Newspapers...), for civil society to reorganize and for national and international agendas to gain ground.

We notice that in the exercise of their duties, journalists and civil society representatives are faced with serious challenges, which include:

- imprisonment, censorship, closure of newspaper houses as well as radio and TV stations
- Limited access to Internet, etc.

This situation constitutes a barrier to participatory democracy which, ideally, should guide our leaders in all stages of decision making. Some media practitioners lack the necessary training that is required for their jobs. The ethics of journalism should guide all journalists in the exercise of their duties. Unfortunately, this media pluralism does not necessarily lead to diversity of opinion.

In short, freedom of expression and diversity of opinion in a democratic country which respects its laws should be the pillar of the socio-economic development of African countries.

B – DEMOCRACY

Regarding the second point, which focuses on democracy, the group noted that this aspect did not take into account the local realities and aspirations of populations. For some African countries, democracy was imposed as a precondition for certain benefits from the international community. This situation pushed some African countries into endless wars, and the concept of rebellion as a means to seize power.

An effective democracy includes its people in the development of their country. During electoral campaigns, some African leaders use state resources for their propaganda. In most cases, distribution of posts of responsibility does not depend on one's competence and experience but rather on one's political affiliation. The issue of separation of power is a major barrier to democracy in Africa. We note that there are loopholes in texts that govern democratic change of power.

Regarding citizen participation in some African countries, NGOs have taken over the state's role in educating the people on health, agriculture and wealth creation issues.

II - RECOMMENDATIONS

For the first point on freedom of expression and diversity of opinions,

The group recommends the following to African governments:

- that they respect international treaties on freedom of expression as much as possible
 - That they subsidize Medias and that they increase these subsidies, if they already exist.
 - That they facilitate capacity building of journalists in the areas of information gathering, treatment and diffusion.
 - That they involve civil society more in decision making
- respect For the first point on freedom of expression and diversity of opinions,

To media houses, the group suggests:

- That they respect the ethics and best practices of their profession.

On the second issue on democracy, the group recommends the following to African countries:

- That they apply the principle of separation of power as prescribed in constitutions
- That they sensitize their people on the virtues of democracy.
- That they be transparent during elections
- That they take into account the experience and competence of senior experts in allocation of technical positions, rather than basing their decision on political affiliation.
- That they vote laws that protect outgoing presidents after their presidential terms.

III – GROUP MEMBERS

Group 2 was made up of the following people:

1. **Djimrabey M. Didier (Tchad)**
2. **Ahamat abderahim Dinquest (Tchad)**
3. **Bahizi oscar (Burundi)**
4. **Marieme Thiam Ndour**