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Conference recommendations take important steps towards Constitution Building in Africa

The recommendations arising from the African conference on Constitution Building that concluded today take an important step towards establishing good governance across the continent.

“The deliberations and resulting recommendations emerging from the conference, says Julia Dolly Joiner, Commissioner for Political Affairs of the African Union Commission, “are an important milestone in our efforts to ensure the democratic gains that have been made in Africa are secured and deepened.”

The 150 delegates, drawn from AU Member States, civil society and academia, discussed various issues in developing constitutional government in Africa, shared experiences, discussed the challenges and drew up a slew of recommendations for follow up actions that include, among others:

1. AU Member States must be encouraged to establish ongoing activities on the Constitution and ensure open debate for the internalisation of their Constitutions.
2. Constitutions should ensure a better distribution of power, a better organisation and a better control of the State by establishing multiparty systems with free and fair elections capable of ensuring democratic political changeover of state power.
3. Constitutions should be popularised and disseminated so that populations understand them, ensuring better harmony between the exercise of rights and social realities.

4. Constitutions should guarantee the same rights and duties to both men and women.
5. Member States should ensure greater participation of all players concerned: parliamentarians, constitutional courts, civil society organisations and others, in the reflection processes initiated to strengthen constitutional processes.

“These recommendations,” emphasized Vidar Helgesen, Secretary-General of International IDEA, “are designed to respond to the challenges facing democracy across the continent, making democracy work better for development, peace and security through strengthening political institutions and processes.”

This conference, hosted by the Government of Benin, is the first accomplishment under the five-year activity plan to strengthen the workings of democracy in Africa by the African Union (AU) Commission and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA).

Ends.

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