

Kigali, September 14<sup>th</sup> 2018

### **International Day of Democracy Statement by the African Democracy Forum**

The African Democracy Forum would like to join the rest of the world in celebration of the International Day of Democracy 2018 on 15<sup>th</sup> September under the global theme: “Democracy under Strain: Solutions for a changing World”. On this day, we look back at the improvements made so far in promoting and upholding the principles of Democracy, but keeping in mind that there’s still work to be done. It’s an opportunity to envision ways to invigorate democracy and find solutions to the systemic challenges it faces which include economic and political inequalities, limited and at times no involvement of the youth and other marginalized groups into the political system, which can ultimately make democracies more inclusive and more innovative.

For a long time, Africa was known to be the continent for authoritarian rule and often described as a place with no institutions. However, recently, with elections taking place in different African regions, one can say that history could be changing. One of the most important democratic institutions of them all is starting to take root in a surprising number of countries. Presidents have accepted or been forced to accept the ultimate check on their authority in countries such as Benin, Kenya, Mali, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone to name a few. Although there are varied instances when leaders have undermined the rule of law especially in the continent’s more authoritarian countries, it’s also important to acknowledge that there have been more constraints on presidential power in the last two decades. The continent is witnessing processes of democratic consolidation and even though they could be vulnerable to reversal, there are good reasons to believe that in the long-run, living under a democracy will improve the lives of African citizens.

Therefore, the remaining responsibility is to verify whether democratic institutions like term-limits and elections are working as intended which will tell us if democratic procedures are becoming ingrained. As a continent we must also work harder, be informed and involved in order to have effective democratic governance that can enhance the quality of life for everyone.

The African Democracy Forum takes this opportunity to recognize the freedoms that democracy affords us and remind ourselves that it is in our own interest and our responsibility to keep our democracy strong. We remain committed to working with all stakeholders towards the realization of our common goal of a continent whereby its citizens are able to work with their leaders for the betterment of their communities, countries and the continent at large.