

5TH OCTOBER 2018

PRESS BRIEFING ON

**THE SEVENTH ANNUAL CONGRESS OF THE FORUM
OF CHAIRPERSON OF THE FORUM FOR
CONSTITUTIONAL COMMISSIONS AND HOLDERS OF
INDEPENDENT OFFICES**

BY

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Ladies and gentlemen

1. INTRODUCTION

You are all welcome to this media briefing.

The Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices (CCs & IOs) are established by Constitution of Kenya, 2010. They not only discharge their specific individual mandates but they are also charged with the common objective of protecting the sovereignty of the people of Kenya, securing observance by all State Organs of democratic values and principles and promoting Constitutionalism (Article 249(1)).

Pursuant to this common objective, as defined under Chapter 15 of the Constitution, the Chairpersons of Constitutional Commissions and Holders of Independent Office established a

collaborative and consultative forum in 2012 through which they collectively enhance constitutionalism amongst Kenyans. The members of the Forum hold regular bi-monthly meetings and an annual congress, to deliberate on issues of constitutionalism and also enable joint planning and consultation. The Forum has since held six annual congresses in different parts of the country with Kwale hosting the first one in 2012, Mombasa in 2013, Kisumu in 2014, Uasin Gishu in 2015, Nairobi in 2016 and Nyeri in 2017.

This year, the Forum has organized the Seventh Annual Congress to be held from **10th to 12th October 2018** in Meru County, under the theme ***Public Participation: Pathway to Sustainable Development.***

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Constitution underscores the importance of public participation in the exercise of the powers of the State in terms of legislation, decision-making and policy-making. It makes citizen participation a central part of Kenya's governance system and one of our national values and principles. All public processes ranging from policy-making to legislative processes and ultimately decision-making, require the participation of the people.

The obligation to conduct public participation in legislation, decision and policy making rests on Parliament, the Judiciary, Independent Commissions and Offices, Government Ministries, County Assemblies and County Executives, and indeed all public institutions. The responsible authorities are required to provide reasonable and meaningful opportunities for public participation to the citizens.

Benefits of public participation

Public participation creates citizens who feel they belong and have trust in their community and government; citizens who are more aware of their community needs and how government responds to those needs.

It provides opportunities for focused and prioritized community concerns to be addressed by the leaders.

It leads to increased credibility between public officers and communities on important issues and services.

Ultimately, it provides a platform for greater diversity of citizens to contribute to public debate and decision making, therefore holding the leaders to account. This guarantees better service delivery by public officers and leads to sustainable

development, because people are able to identify with projects that are in line with their needs.

Public participation is a tool that ensures transparency of government actions and a deterrent to corrupt practices. It is a prerequisite for the achievement of sustainable development.

Seventh Congress

This year's congress is aimed at reviewing how public participation has been carried out since 2010. It will also evaluate the challenges encountered in the process and canvass for the adoption of best practice standards and approaches to effective public participation. Further, participants who have been drawn from across all section of the communities in Meru County will have the opportunity to interact with the Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in a three-day open exhibition by all the CCs & IOs.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE CONFERENCE

Specifically the objectives of the Congress are:-

- a) Sensitization of the public on the roles and mandates of CCs & IOs.
- b) Creation of a platform for sharing successes and challenges by the CCs & IOs in terms of the delivery of individual and shared mandates.
- c) Strengthening public participation and stakeholder involvement in governance and public administration.
- d) Enhancing the best practices in public participation by borrowing from local, regional and international success stories.

e) Obtaining feedback on ways of improving the role of CCs & IOs in oversight and making recommendations on the way forward.

4. THEMATIC AREAS OF THE CONFERENCE

This year's conference takes place in a background where many Kenyans may not know that they have a constitutional right to participate in governance and other administrative issues affecting them.

Frequently those who mobilize for public participation use approaches which may not give the desired impact, many times just for purpose of ticking the box, to show it happened.

In view of these, the seventh Annual Congress of the CCs & IOs will focus on the following thematic areas:

- a) Public participation as a prerequisite for observance of human rights and sustainable socio-economic development.
- b) Enhancing democratic governance through public participation.
- c) Participation of the citizens in public appointments to promote accountability and integrity in leadership.

5. CONCLUSION

Public participation is at the heart of the Constitution of Kenya.

It is a civic duty of every citizen to demand to be included in all decisions that affects them. Similarly, there should be a mechanism of follow up, and feedback, to ensure that when

members of the public present their contributions, they are actually considered and truly inform decisions and policy.

We therefore call upon all Kenyans to embrace this critical requirement in the constitution: Public participation. We call upon you, the media to help activate this critical debate, on the need for effective public participation by educating the citizens that it is their cardinal responsibility to be involved in all administrative and governance issues affecting them.

We welcome all of you to Meru County for the Seventh Annual Congress

Thank you.