



PARLIAMENT OF KENYA

INAUGURAL AFRICAN PARLIAMENTARY RESEARCHERS CONFERENCE 2019

Date: 18th – 22nd March, 2019

Venue: Nairobi, Kenya

Theme: “Realizing the potential of Parliamentary Research Services in African Parliaments”

CONCEPT NOTE AND INVITATION

1. Background

The key roles of Members of Parliament around the World consist of oversight, legislation and representation¹. The ability of Members of Parliament to effectively perform these roles along the policy and legislative cycle is shaped by their access to concise, reliable, authoritative, accurate and neutral information². They require a wide range of reliable evidence to effectively scrutinize the activities of government to safeguard the intention of Parliament as expressed in legislation and policies adopted by parliamentarians.

People-centeredness is the rallying approach to formulation, coordination and implementation of policies and legislations. The legislature should be the strongest link and an enabler of democratic ideals as the custodian of the sovereign power of the people. The fledgling parliamentary democracy, therefore, requires that national priorities and policies should be publicly debated and the government should be held accountable to the citizens for its decisions.

To shape public opinion, parliamentary debates and deliberations should be supported by a meaningful framework for acquiring concise, synthesized and analyzed easily accessible facts for the members of parliament. In their quest to optimally perform these sacrosanct roles, members of parliament face the daunting task of securing access to reliable, authoritative and concise information necessary for them to intervene effectively on public policy issues. A well-resourced Parliamentary research service can play a critical role as transmitters, interpreters and synthesizers of cutting-edge information for legislators³.

Parliamentary Research Service has been identified as one of the building blocks of an effective Parliament⁴. They are of incalculable value as a source of reliable, authoritative,

¹ John K. Johnson, 2005, The Role of Parliament in Government

² Inter Parliamentary Union and International Federation of Library Associations (2015) Guidelines for Parliamentary Research Services. Geneva: IPU

³ Ibid 2

⁴ Ibid 3

independent and accurate analysis. They offer a safe space where Members of Parliament from all political persuasions can ask questions and get answers they can trust.

They contribute to a parliament's autonomy by providing a reality check on the perspectives put forward by the executive branch of government, lobby groups, academia, interest groups and the media.

2. Parliaments in Africa

African Parliaments, like in any other part of the World, are key institutions of democracy and they play an important role in terms of legislation, oversight and representation. Fulfilling this mandate requires an enabling environment and the legislatures to possess some essential organizational and resources capacities⁵. Parliaments obviously require knowledge and expertise in vast array of technical areas to enable them fulfill their mandate.

However, like most countries in the World, there exist peculiarities in most African Parliaments which have affected the design of both short-term and long-term policies and legislative initiatives. Legislation for instance frequently requires expertise and capacity whereas legislators are drawn from a diverse background with varying levels of experience and technical capacity. Further legislators do not have sufficient capacity to seek and acquire evidence⁶. The problem is further compounded by inadequate research evidence in legislatures⁷.

It is therefore critical that the Parliamentary Research Service as the cutting-edge information producer creates the necessary partnerships and networks that will shape its response to the varying needs of parliamentarians.

IPU and IFLA co-sponsored '**Guidelines for Parliamentary Research Services**'⁸ identified building useful partnerships and networks of parliamentary research colleagues in other jurisdictions as an essential step in establishing the desired Parliamentary Research Services.

In line with this evidence, Parliament of Kenya is hosting the **Inaugural African Parliamentary Researchers Conference 2019** under the theme "***Realizing the potential of Parliamentary Research Services in African Parliaments***".

3. Conference Objectives

The main objective of the conference is to provide a platform for Parliamentary Research Services in African Parliaments to establish mutually beneficial partnerships for sharing best practices, information and knowledge; build capacity of its members and promote evidence-based policies and legislations.

⁵ Economic Commission for Africa, The Role of Parliament in Promoting Good Governance

⁶ CLEAR, 2016, Supporting the use of Evidence for Oversight in African Legislatures

⁷ Newman, *et. al.* (2013). What is the evidence on evidence-informed policy making? Lessons from the International Conference on Evidence-Informed policy making.

⁸ Inter Parliamentary Union and International Federation of Library Associations (2015) Guidelines for Parliamentary Research Services. Geneva: IPU

The key objectives of the conference will be to:

- i. Deliberate on place of Parliamentary Research Services and its organizational models in African Parliaments;
- ii. Strengthen capacity of legislative Researchers through exchange and sharing of best practices, knowledge and experiences;
- iii. Promote evidence-use in decision making in African Parliaments;
- iv. Forge and maintain strong network and linkages with Parliamentary Research Services, Research colleagues in other jurisdictions as well as research and policy institutions, and relevant stakeholders at national, regional and international level; and;
- v. Establish an association for the African legislative Researchers working in African Parliaments.

4. Participants

The Conference will bring together researchers from African Parliaments (National and Subnational levels), and researchers from related research institutions.

5. Call for Papers

The Parliament of Kenya is pleased to invite proposals for short, engaging and inspiring presentations for a knowledge sharing, interactive open session discussions during the conference. Participants intending to present papers at the conference are welcome to submit abstracts tailored towards addressing any of the following thematic areas.

Thematic areas:

- i. Institutionalization and management of research services in legislatures: Overview of the various Models.
- i. Capacity strengthening of parliamentary researchers: Mechanisms and best practices.
- ii. Transforming research services uptake and evidence use for decision making in African Parliaments: status, challenges and opportunities.
- iii. Partnering with Parliaments: The role of Research and Policy Institutions.
- iv. Emerging practices and innovations in parliamentary research.

Submissions guidelines:

- The abstracts not exceeding 300 words should be submitted online to the following email: prs.aprc2019@parliament.go.ke or prs.aprc2019@gmail.com by **11th January, 2019**.
- Abstracts should clearly highlight the objective, problem, methodology, key findings/results, conclusions and recommendations. Also purely theoretical papers focussing on the sub themes will be accepted.
- The abstract should include the name of the author(s), affiliation(s), postal address, and email and telephone contacts.

- Each paper should not exceed 5,000 words (excluding abstract, references and footnotes), single spacing font size 12, times new roman, tables and figures inserted where cited, Ms Word format.
- The abstract and the full paper should have the APA format of referencing.

Note: All proposals will be reviewed by a panel and the author(s) informed of the outcome by **25th January, 2019** and submission of full papers by **28th February, 2019**.

Essential information

- All papers must be submitted in English;
- All papers will be peer reviewed; and
- Published papers will be posted on the open access online conference archive.

Send to:

Email: prs.aprc2019@parliament.go.ke Or prs.aprc2019@gmail.com

6. Venue

The Conference will be held in Nairobi, Kenya

7. Contacts

Director, Information and Research Services,
Parliament of Kenya,
Tel: +254 20 2221291 or 2848000 extension 3665
Email: prs.aprc2019@parliament.go.ke
prs.aprc2019@gmail.com

8. Conference Registration Form

The Conference registration form is attached.

9. Conference Costs

Participants will be responsible for their individual Conference expenses, including the following:

- i. Airline booking and return travel to Nairobi, Kenya.
- ii. Personal expenses, including accommodation and medical during their stay in Nairobi.
- iii. Visa fees.
- iv. Travel insurance.
- v. Conference registration fees.