

European Parliament seminars

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Opening words

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Habari za asubuhi.

Honourable Speaker and Members of the Zanzibar House of Representatives
Honourable Vice-President of the European Parliament, Honourable David
Martin and other Members of the European Parliament,
Representatives of political parties, religious organisations and the civil society,
All protocol observed.

Mimi ni Luana Reale, Balozi mdogo wa Umoja wa Ulaya.

The European Union supports a variety of models of democracy, but what they all have in common is that "democracy" provides space for disagreement without resort to violence. There will always be political contestation. That is a sign of a healthy multi-party democracy.

The reason why the European Union likes and defends democracy is that different opinions are voiced and accepted, stakeholders are open to dialogue and compromise, and the leaders are accountable to their citizens.

The European Union does not promote a blueprint of democracy. Instead, it can draw upon the frameworks and experience of its 28 Member States as examples of the diverse ways in which institutional challenges can be addressed, while maintaining basic democratic principles.

We do believe some essential building blocks are needed to develop a deep and sustainable democracy. Credible, transparent, and inclusive elections are one such building block.

In Tanzania, we are glad to be supporting the general elections through projects like the Democratic Empowerment Project, managed by UNDP, and

PROPEL, a project in support of a peaceful and inclusive electoral process, led by the European Centre of Electoral Support. The incoming EU Election Observation Mission and this very seminar organised by the European Parliament with the House of Representatives make our engagement stronger and more consistent.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Political stability and peaceful co-existence among different ethnic and religious parts of the population have been a feature of the United Republic of Tanzania since its early statehood.

Thanks to this, Tanzania has achieved regional weight and has contributed to democracy-building, peace, and security in the region.

The highly competitive political environment in Zanzibar has made it a traditional hot spot of elections. However, Zanzibar also has an equally important history of dialogue processes during elections, such as Mufuaka and Maridhiano, which has led to the impressive achievements of the Government of National Unity.

We see that in the current situation, both the ruling party and parties of the Ukawa coalition have well-rooted structures across the country; they have seasoned and popular leaders and by and large they have proved to respect parliamentary democracy, peace, and the rule of law. New parties are also emerging and this provides a healthy balance in the election process.

We believe that peaceful competition and the safeguard of national unity should be the prime concern of all, beyond partisan interests. And we encourage all parties to ensure that the General Elections, whatever their outcome, do not degenerate into unrest and violence.

The worst risk that we see is that both in Zanzibar and in Mainland the main camps argue that defeat is unconceivable. Starting an election campaign with

the mind-set that the only acceptable outcome is victory is a recipe for tension. Democracy is in the possibility of conceding defeat, not in the certainty of claiming victory. For whoever loses in these elections, there will always be future opportunities, and for Zanzibar a seat at the GNU.

Because results will be very close in these elections, it will be wise to invest in deepening the GNU, rather than weakening it.

Esteemed guests,

In this seminar I have heard important words: words such as Amani, Upendo, Umoja and also Heshima and Uvumilivu.

Over and over again we hear that people want peace – the same that they enjoyed in 2010 and since. It is important that political stakeholders join hands in preserving peace, democracy and order, and conversely, that they prevent any slippage from a peaceful path, including use of force, militias, or intimidation.

We as European Union give our wholehearted support to transparent, credible, and inclusive elections, and peaceful solution of disagreements – before, during and after Election Day.

We urge the parties and the ZEC to work together to neutralise hard-liners, hate speech, and unsubstantiated allegations. We also recommend that the civil society, religious groups, women, the youth and the media are involved in current efforts to promote peaceful elections.

These seminars organised by the European Parliament and the Zanzibari House of Representatives represent well this joined endeavour of advancing democracy and preserving peace in Tanzania. Please, keep it up!

Asante sana