

The Windhoek Declaration

Africa's vision on decentralisation

At the Africities 2000 Summit, held in Windhoek on 15 - 20 May 2000, ministers of local government and of finance on the African continent, mayors, leaders and members of local government associations in Africa, researchers and eminent personalities from Africa and beyond adopted the Windhoek Declaration, which includes the following "African Vision on Decentralisation":

Preamble

Africa is in quest for democratic governance that harmonises the sharing of responsibility between central and local level that empowers people, democratizes society and co-shares the responsibility to decide on policies that affect people's daily life. Therefore, we the Ministers and Local Government Leaders gathered together in Windhoek agree to commit ourselves to promote and support the vision of decentralisation in our respective countries which will include the following:

Objectives:

1. The purpose of decentralisation should be to devolve authority as well as political, administrative and financial powers decision-making and policy-implementation responsibilities to sub-national governments (SNGs).
2. Decentralisation should be, to sub-national governments which are representative of and accountable to all sectors of the local population, including marginalized and disadvantaged groups.
3. The underlying purpose of decentralisation, to bring government closer to the people, to empower people, to strengthen democratic values in society, and to contribute to social and economic development, are consequential for the survival of democracy, its credibility and functional purpose.
4. Decentralisation should be, to levels of sub-national governments and institutions which enable effective community participation in sub-national governance.
5. Government to, by, for and with the people at sub-national levels is considered as one of the pillars stabilizing and sustaining democracy in the society.
6. Interaction and interfacing between sub-national authorities and central government and between sub-national authorities and their clientele.
7. Decentralisation should involve the transfer to sub-national authorities those powers, functions and responsibilities necessary to enable them to:
 - Provide services for the population at sub-national level efficiently, competitively and effectively;
 - Provide a conducive environment for development at sub-national level;
 - Develop and manage local resources in a sustainable manner.
8. Decentralisation should include the provision of access to resources needed to execute the mentioned powers and functions efficiently, effectively and purposefully, including financial and human resources.
9. Financial resources should be available to authorities at sub-national level in a manner which is reliable, predictable, transparent, accountable, sustainable and equitable.
10. Decentralisation as a principle should be enshrined in the constitution.
11. Decentralisation is a never-ending process implemented in stages but continuously.
12. Decentralisation should accept the challenge of globalization by strengthening capacity building at sub-national level and to make them competitive entities in the global economy.