

African European Parliamentarians Initiative

Safeguarding Democracy: Electoral Integrity, Civic Space, and Parliamentary Oversight

4 – 5 December, 2025

Parliament of Uganda, Kampala, Uganda

Speaking Points

- It is wonderful to join you today. Ireland is proud to provide to The African European Parliamentarians Initiative (AEPI) since its establishment in 2020. We are particularly pleased to see the relationship with the East African Legislative Assembly flourish this year.
- Strengthening governance is one of our policy priorities as set out in our International Development Policy, A Better World. Supporting democracy and governance is at the heart of Ireland's development cooperation. Strengthening governance and supporting inclusive governance is central to Ireland's overarching ambition to reach those furthest behind first.
- Ireland and Uganda have a long-standing partnership and we have proudly stood alongside you in moving towards peace, development and prosperity. Both our countries understand how precious democracy, and the ability to decide and control our own destinies, is. Electoral integrity, strong oversight and a vibrant civic space are fundamental pillars in this pursuit.
- Free and fair elections, coupled with institutions that are effective and accountable are key building blocks of any thriving and flourishing society. Yet, these elements should not, and cannot, be taken for granted. They require continuous investment, interest and improvement. A free and vibrant civic space and media play an invaluable role in this process.
- Ireland has long been a champion of the vital role of civil society as a core human rights issue. We continue to advocate for the vital role played by civil society in building peaceful,

inclusive and prosperous societies and the central importance of a human rights-based approach in democratic processes.

- With partners across the continent, Ireland is working to promote electoral integrity and to enhance election management bodies. We particularly focus on encouraging women's participation as candidates and voters and enabling election observers to monitor and report on the electoral processes. In my own country, we have first-hand experience of the transformative impact of the full and meaningful participation of women within the democratic process. Empowering women of diverse backgrounds to participate in politics, leadership and public life at all levels of decision-making benefits everyone. We get better results when there is a diversity of views around the table.
- Ireland's development cooperation focuses on gender, governance climate action and ending humanitarian need. In Uganda and elsewhere, Ireland works with partners to promote civil society oversight of critical democratic processes, to support the political participation of women and young people and to foster civic education and awareness.
- Through our support to partners including the African European Parliamentarians Initiative (AEPI) and the UNDP, we are proud to facilitate the potential for shared learning and capacity of parliaments and parliamentarians in their key oversight functions.
- In all our governance-strengthening work, Ireland strives to engage with our fellow EU member states including through the Team Europe Democracy (TED) initiative, which focuses on the rule of law; political and civic participation; and safety, security and professionalism in media and the digital realm. I would like to extend my thanks to all our EU partners in this work and it is great to see so many of you here at this seminar.
- In conclusion, safeguarding democracy is a shared priority of all of us in this room, and beyond. This continent understands

better than most how precious democracy is and the desire of all peoples to choose their own destiny.

- Ireland is incredibly proud to work alongside you in this pursuit, seeking to develop and strengthen the key tenets of democracy, namely electoral integrity, civic space and Parliamentary oversight.
- I look forward to the outcome of your discussions at this seminar and the lessons we can share and learn to create a safer and more prosperous future for all our citizens.

Background

The African European Parliamentarians Initiative (AEPI) was established in 2020 to advance development issues within Parliaments in a number of countries, in Europe and in Africa, with a view to fostering collaborative action. Areas include capacity building, parliamentary training, transparency, accountability and peace and security.

Funding of €100,000 was provided by DCAD in December 2024, with an additional €50,000 provided in November 2025, bringing the total amount for this year to €150,000. In total, funding of €450,000 has been granted to AEPI since December 2020.

The East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) is one of the seven organs of the East African Community (EAC), serving as its legislative and oversight arm. Its current membership is 72: nine representatives from each of the eight Partner States - the Republic of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Kenya, the Republic of Rwanda, the Federal Republic of Somalia, the Republic of South Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania, and the Republic of Uganda.

EALA and AEPI renewed their intention to work together in a Memorandum of Understanding signed in March 2025, in which they stated their intention to cooperate in between enhancing the capacity of Members and Secretariats of EALA and National Assemblies of the EAC Partner States.

The first such joint intervention is this event, the first of a new series of Nanyuki seminars to be held this year in Kampala, Uganda on the 4 and 5 December, 2025. Participants in the workshop will include Members of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), Representatives of AEPI, Ministers responsible for East African Community (EAC) Affairs, and the EAC Secretary General.

The intention of this workshop are to: enhance awareness of Regional Governance Challenges; improve legislative tools for electoral Integrity; and produce policy recommendations for enhancing electoral transparency and civic participation.