



# 5th International Forum of Participatory Democracy in Africa (FIDEPA 05)

Cotonou - BENIN, August 8 – 10, 2024



**CONCEPT NOTE**

June 2024

# 1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The global and regional context is marked by remarkable facts notably:

i. The crisis of representative democracy, the illustrations of which range from citizens' disinterest in elections to challenges to the constitutional order, including demands for space for participation between two elections. This crisis varies in intensity from one country to another, with the result: lack of confidence, mistrust or even distrust in public institutions.

ii. The persistent economic crisis and the degradation of the social fabric in several countries in Africa can also be attributed to a lack of participation in elections.

Existing models are essentially based on the timely organization of elections for the devolution of executive, legislative and local power. However, participatory democracy, intervening between elections and seeking to ensure the participation of citizens and various stakeholders in the management of mandates, offers better prospects for development that should be explored,

from the local to the national level.

iii. The end of the global health crisis (Covid 19), which should allow the economic recovery of countries and territories of Africa. Covid 19, reminding us of the environmental, economic, health, safety, food issues etc..., invites us to a new development paradigm based on the inclusiveness of democracy participatory and the important role that cities and territories must assume, alongside States, while respecting the subsidiarity principle.

iv. And finally, the multiple transitions, which mark the world in general and Africa in a specific way and whose rhythms and scale are unprecedented in the demographic, economic, political, climatic, energetic domain etc... These profound changes will have impacts and repercussions in cities and territories, which should push them to question these transitions to make the most of them in terms of positioning.





The Cotonou International Forum will therefore be a major meeting to fructify knowledge, practices and identify avenues of action in order to ward off what some actors call “the economic sterility of democracy”.

This current crisis environment highlights the urgency of rethinking our governance models and to promote innovative solutions to overcome the challenges we face.

By encouraging citizen participation and strengthening participatory democracy mechanisms, we can restore trust between citizens and governments, strengthen social cohesion and promote a sustainable and inclusive development. In this context, cities in Africa and around the world are inventing solutions to make participatory democracy the basis of social and economic development, responsible citizenship and territorial cohesion. These solutions deserve to be capitalized on and developed further so that they are accessible, not only to the municipal world, but also to States and actors from civil society and universities.

The Cotonou forum offers the opportunity to share good practices, stimulate dialogue between stakeholders in civil society, leaders and international institutions, and to formulate concrete recommendations to strengthen citizenship and participatory democracy. By unifying our efforts and by working together we can build a better future for all.

The Cotonou's International Forum proposes to discuss the overall theme: **“Citizenship and participatory democracy as a stimulus lever in a context of geopolitical, economical and transitional crisis”**.



## 2. OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

The city of Cotonou holds the Presidency of IOPD Africa and intends to organize the 5th International Forum for Participatory Democracy (FIDEPA 05).

Strongly supported by the Government of President Patrice TALON, the City of Cotonou intends to make the 5th edition of the FIDEPA a historic meeting both in the quality of the reflections and the cultural development and sightseeing.

This forum will provide the opportunity for actors and practitioners in decentralization, governance and local development to exchange with experts in the sector of citizenship and participatory democracy in order to elucidate the current issues linked to the geopolitical, economical and transitional crises in Africa. Through exchanges of experiences and good practices, it will be a question of finding innovative approaches to revive democratic societies and strengthen citizen participation.

Thus, the objectives set are:

- Reflect on active citizenship and democratic participation as means of consolidating acquired democratic knowledge and the strengthening of social cohesion in Africa and the world;
- Share experiences, challenges, advances and processes limitations of participatory democracy on the continent ;
- Promote benchmarking, exchange on good practices and policies and connection between territorial communities and different actors of the participatory democracy ;

- Develop concrete recommendations and actions in order to promote a democratic, effective and inclusive relaunch.

The expected results are:

- A better understanding of the issues linked to citizenship and participatory democracy in a context of political, economical and transitional crises;
- A fruitful exchange of experiences and good practices between the different actors present at the Forum;
- The formulation of concrete recommendations to strengthen citizen participation and consolidate democratic processes;
- Dissemination of the Forum's results through publications and advocacy actions among political decision-makers and civil society.

Each IOPD Africa Forum offers a broad space for reflection, sharing experiences, building new knowledge and innovations. Each represents a real opportunity for opening up to the world, meeting people and networking.

The particularity of the Cotonou Forum is that there will be a special session on decentralized cooperation around the issues of participatory democracy. Through this special session, the presidency of the IOPD Africa wishes to strengthen collaboration between the continent's cities, CSOs and universities on the theme of local democracy, as a pillar of democracy in our States.



### 3. DISCUSSIONS

The International Forum which will mobilize participants from African countries and the World will look into a central theme: **“Citizenship and participatory democracy as recovery lever in the context of geopolitical, economical and transitional crises”**. An inaugural conference that emphasizes this central theme will be introduced by two (2) eminent personalities.

The inaugural conference will be followed by three (3) panels, which will successively address the themes:

- human rights and citizenship: a territorial response to economic and geopolitical crises;
- participatory democracy in the establishment of an inspiring and inclusive governance apparatus;
- overview, issues and challenges of participatory democracy to better support transitions.

During the six (6) parallel sessions, panelists and participants will have the opportunity to address the themes:

**Session 1** : Strengthening community resilience through local initiatives in response to economical, geopolitical and health crises;

**Session 2** : Inclusion and equal rights: promoting active citizenship in the context of promoting grassroots development;

**Session 3** : Citizen engagement and collaborative decision-making: challenges and opportunities for inclusive governance;

**Session 4** : Transparency and accountability in democratic governance: promoting trust and legitimacy;

**Session 5** : Sharing experiences on participatory budget;

**Session 6** : Participatory Budget models and methods of implementing a participatory budget in a local government.



## 4. ORGANIZATION METHODOLOGY

The international forum is planned during three days and the work will be structured around different highlights:

- an opening plenary session, which will be introduced by an inaugural conference;
- high-level panels in plenary, which will be introduced by political, scientific and civil society figures;
- parallel sessions in workshops and small groups;
- a special session;
- a ceremony to present the trophies of

the Local Leadership Excellence Award to local authorities, academics, researchers and journalists, communicators, having documented good practices and innovations in territorial governance, but also to government authorities having made major advances in promoting decentralization, governance and development.

- reading of the final declaration and;
- Closure.

August 11th, 2024 will be devoted to touristic activities

Opening hours	August 08		August 09		August 10	August 11				
09H00-09H30	Welcome and accreditation		Installation		Installation	Visits to Tourist Sites				
09H30-10H00			Panel 2: "Participatory democracy in the establishment of an inspiring and inclusive governance apparatus".		IOPD Africa General Meeting					
10H00-10H30										
10H30-11H00	COFFEE BREAK		COFFEE BREAK							
11H-11H30	Opening		Parallel Session 3: Citizen engagement and collaborative decision-making: challenges and opportunities for inclusive governance		Parallel Session 4: Transparency and accountability in democratic governance: promoting trust and legitimacy					
11H30-12H00							IOPD Africa General Meeting			
12H00-12H30										
12H30-13H00			Inaugural Lecture: "Citizenship and participatory democracy as a lever for recovery in the context of geopolitical and economic crises and transition".							
13H00-13H30										
13H30-14H30	LUNCH BREAK									
14H30-15H00	Panel 1: "Human rights and citizenship: a territorial response to economic, geopolitical and health crises".		Panel 3: " Panorama, issues and challenges of participatory democracy to better support transitions."		1. Local Leadership Excellence Awards Gala					
15H00-15H30										
3:30 PM - 4:00 PM					2. Reading of the Final Declaration					
16H-16H30	Parallel Session 1: Building community resilience through local initiatives in response to economic, geopolitical and health crises		Parallel Session 2: Inclusion and equal rights: promoting active citizenship in grassroots development contexts		Parallel Session 5: Sharing experiences of participatory budgeting					
16H30-17H00							Parallel Session 6: Participatory budget models and how to set up a participatory budget in a local authority.			
17H00-17H30										
17H30-18H00									3. Closing	





## 5. PRESENTATION OF THE CITY OF COTONOU AND FORUM VENUE

Economic capital of Benin, Cotonou is made up of a population of 679,012 inhabitants (4th RGPH) and has the same characteristics as most large African cities namely: high rate urbanization, densification of economic activities, establishment of large institutions.

According to statistics, trading, catering, accommodation (40.5%), “other services” (24.7%) and “manufacturing industries” (14.6%) constitute the branches of activity that predominate in Cotonou. These services are the most developed sectors because of the geostrategic position of the city, corridor, port platform, administrative and political city. In this dynamic, the city of Cotonou offers enormous touristic opportunities (picturesque beaches and riverbanks lagoons) with a dominance of such sites, the majority of which constitute deities.

Cotonou makes available to participants of 5 star hotels, the impressive Palais des Congrès. Around this den of conferences, one can find the best hotels in Benin with comfortable rooms and a XXL service in the image of Beninese hospitality. VIP vehicles and buses will ensure the movement of participants. In addition to these opportunities, there's the chance to share the culinary art of Benin, one of the best in Africa, field visits and tourist circuit from Cotonou to Ouidah by the Route des Pêches or from Cotonou to Porto-Novo or in Ganvié nicknamed the Venice of Africa.



It might also be possible to go to Abomey, a historic town, 120 km from Cotonou or in the north of Benin which is full of important tourist sites.

The State-Cotonou partnership will allow participants to benefit from:

- the security system of the government ;
- Support and Government participation;
- favors from the reception system at Cardinal International Airport Bernardin GANTIN;

About security, Government of Benin has developed strategies making it possible to guarantee the tranquility of residents as well as foreigners.

The Palais des Congrès, which will host the fifth edition of FIDEPA, offers all the amenities for a large-scale event with:

- an 850 m<sup>2</sup> room that can accommodate plenary sessions of 1,200 people;
- multiple meeting rooms that can host workshops with up to 600 people; room for secretariat, press service box, etc.



## 6. PRESENTATION OF IOPD AFRICA

The International Observatory for Participatory Democracy for Africa (IOPD Africa) is a pan-African organization, serving national governments, local authorities, civil society organizations, universities and research centers who wish to deepen the knowledge and practices of participatory democracy, governance and local development. The diversity of actors who lead the IOPD Africa, make this organization a multi-actor exchange platform and actions for an Africa resolutely committed to participatory democracy allowing public life between two elections which establish representative democracy.

IOPD Africa's missions are to strengthen the dynamics of participatory democracy ; to disseminate the experiences of participatory democracy throughout the rest of the world and promote a broad community of knowledge, exchange of experiences and sharing of good practices of participatory democracy.

Each year, the Observatory organizes the International Forum for Democracy Participatory in Africa (FIDEPA) in the city which holds the Presidency. The event brings together local elected officials, government representatives central, civil society, academics and research centers. It will be organized in the format of conferences, exchange sessions and networking.





*Inaugural conference, introduced by His Excellency Joaquim Alberto CHISSANO, former President of the Republic of Mozambique*

## 7. CONTACTS

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