AfriPal
Africa Regional Convening on Parliament and Legislation

Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis

Theme:

African Parliaments in the digital age: reimagining possibilities for better performance and networked governance.

Gaborone Botswana, 22nd -23rd July, 2027

The 2nd Africa Regional Conference on Parliament and Legislation (AFRIPAL, 2027)

Call for Panels/Sessions and Roundtables

CALL FOR PANELS/SESSIONS/ROUNDTABLES

AFRIPAL 2027 Conference Theme: ***African Parliaments in the digital age: reimagining possibilities for better performance and networked governance***

AFRIPAL Convening invites scholars, researchers, policy actors, parliamentary and legislative practitioners, and members of parliament from across Africa and beyond to the 2nd Africa Regional Conference on Parliament and Legislation (AFRIPAL 2027), to be held in Gaborone, Botswana, at the Grand Palm Hotel from July 22–23, 2027. The conference will be hosted by the Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis (BIDPA) in collaboration with regional and international partners.

Background

The digital age has permeated nearly all facets of life, and government and legislative institutions are no exception. While this transformation is more advanced in some regions, parliaments across Africa are increasingly embracing digitalisation, albeit at a gradual pace. This transition is inevitable.

In the digital era, the parliamentary functions of legislation, representation, and oversight will inevitably take on new meaning. The proliferation of digital technology and the internet has positioned digital spaces almost as constituencies with their own dynamics that require deeper study. For instance, the use of social media and its ability to enhance public engagement may require a rethinking of traditional modes of representation.

While digital technologies create opportunities for inclusiveness, they also present challenges of exclusion, with the possibility of further entrenching established political power structures to the point of oppression and curtailment of freedoms. Questions surrounding vulnerable populations, therefore, remain pertinent. With already entrenched historical disadvantages, how can women, youth, and persons with disabilities effectively participate in the digital age and utilise technology to engage in parliamentary and legislative processes?

This also brings to the fore the issue of accountability. Most African Parliaments rank lowly in putting legislative information out into the public domain and facilitating broad-based access to legislative processes. While part of the reason is attributable to low political will and censorship, another reason is inadequate

use of automation and technological applications to significantly broaden citizen access to their legislatures. The significant digital divide, evidenced by 47% of citizens who own a smartphone, let alone 35% who own a basic phone, also presents a major challenge to public engagement and reflects the continued closed nature of many parliaments. Nonetheless, the proliferation of social media and the need to harness its reach remain important areas for exploration.

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance parliamentary functions also comes with attendant challenges, particularly in Africa. These include linguistic diversity, the limited existence of laws governing AI use, and insufficient procedural and regulatory frameworks to guide AI adoption. There is also the pressing issue of digital colonialism. How can African parliaments collaborate with big tech corporations and multinationals to decentralise control of the internet and facilitate the development of AI technologies that reflect African institutions and realities?

While globalisation provides opportunities to learn from best practices, African parliaments must avoid becoming overly dependent on external service providers. Instead, they should strategically position themselves by establishing strong governance structures and exercising leadership that ensures the sustainable and ethical use of AI technologies.

Although parliaments across Africa have leveraged digital tools to improve parliamentary functions such as document management, voting, and record-keeping, a key area of concern remains understanding how digital technologies are reshaping parliamentary systems and legislative structures.

AFRIPAL 2027, therefore, invites scholars and policy actors to reflect on the:

- Theoretical perspectives of parliamentary democracy in the digital era;
- frameworks of representation and accountability in the digital age; and
- possibilities of networked governance in enhancing parliamentary practice in Africa.

AFRIPAL 2027 does not seek merely to focus on the basic practices of e-parliament, but rather to interrogate their connection with e-democracy and provide in-depth analysis and reflection on the operations of African parliaments and legislatures in the digital era.

Participants are encouraged to explore the following sub-themes, as well as other issues related to the main conference theme:

Sub-Themes

(i). **Representation and accountability in the Digital Era**
Including frameworks of democratic accountability in the digital era,

public engagement, committee oversight, and issues of vulnerability, gender, disability, and digital imperatives for parliaments' public information.

(ii). **Parliamentary Democracy in Africa in the Digital Age**
Theoretical and practical applications of parliamentary democracy in the digital era from African perspectives.

(iii). **Networked Governance and Its Influence on African Parliamentary Systems**
Including South–South and North–South legislative relations and knowledge exchange.

(iv). **Capacity Building for Digital Parliaments**
Skills development, leadership, institutional readiness, and e-parliament practices.

(v). **Constitutionalism, Legislation, and Legislative Autonomy in the Digital Age**
Digital ethics, governance, and legislative innovation.

FORMAT

The conference will be a two-day, in-person gathering, with limited slots available for online presentations. It will feature keynote plenaries, panel discussions, breakout(concurrent) sessions, workshops, exhibits and case study presentations.

Interactive sessions will encourage knowledge exchange and collaborative problem-solving among participants, academia, civil society organisations, and conference delegates.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

AFRIPAL invites proposals in the following formats:

- **Individual Papers**
  Original research papers that may later be considered for publication in a journal special issue or edited volume. These proposals will undergo scientific review and be presented within thematic panels and sessions.
- **Panels/Sessions**
  Proposed by conference delegates and organisations, these sessions typically include a chairperson, a discussant, and up to five panellists or paper presenters. Each presenter will be allotted time to present their paper, followed by discussion and audience engagement.
- **Roundtables**
  Discussion-centred sessions that facilitate deliberation on topical issues related to the conference theme by experts and participants. These typically do not include formal paper presentations.
- **Book Launch Roundtables**
  Sessions focused on discussions around books published within one year of the conference.
- **Workshops**

Pre-conference or in-conference workshops are conducted for conference delegates, members of parliament, parliamentary staff, academics, early-career researchers, and practitioners. Participation is usually by invitation. Organisations and individuals are welcome to organise workshops related to the conference theme in collaboration with the organising committee.

Panel, Session and Roundtable presenters are encouraged to reflect on the conference theme and sub-themes.

All panel, session and roundtable abstract proposals will be given a timely and double-blind peer review process, and selected sessions and panels will be published in the subsequent call for papers

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

All interested participants should submit a 250-word abstract proposal via the link below, with a title no longer than 20 words. The proposal should state the critical question and argument. Include 3-5 keywords and a short bio of not more than 50 words.

Session/panel/roundtable abstracts for the conference should be submitted online on the call for panels/sessions/roundtables form.

The AFRIPAL conference also provides opportunities for delegates who are not able to present a paper but would be willing to take part in the conversations. If you would like to attend the conference, please register to attend the conference.

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FEES

- Standard Conference Fee (includes accommodation) – **USD 480**
- Early Bird Registration Fee (includes accommodation) – **USD 450**

Note: All panel, session, roundtable, and paper presenters are required to register to attend the conference.

KEY DATES

- Call for panel/session/roundtable abstracts, arts, and media proposals: **June 1, 2026**
- Submission deadline for panel/session/roundtable abstracts, arts, and media proposals: **September 11, 2026**

- Acceptance of panel/session/roundtable proposals: **September 25, 2026**
- Call for papers: **October 16, 2026**
- Submission deadline for papers: **January 22, 2027**
- Acceptance of papers: **February 26, 2027**
- Submission of full conference papers and workshop schedules: **April 1, 2027**
- Early bird registration deadline: **April 30, 2027**
- Standard conference registration deadline: **June 11, 2027**
- Conference dates: **July 22–23, 2027**