

Kenya has a lot to learn from the 200-year- Old Norwegian constitution. This was said during a one day seminar dubbed, “Kenyan and Norwegian constitutions: Experiences and Lessons Learned.” at 8-4-4 multipurpose hall, on 19th May, 2014.

While presenting a key note address on the vision of the Kenyan constitution, Chief Justice, Dr Willy Mutunga said that the making of the new constitution (2010) signaled a new dispensation of social and political order. Dr Mutunga also said that the Kenyan constitution was anchored at maintaining democratic checks and balances and that the ultimate authority belonged to the people of Kenya. The Chief Justice noted that Norway was a shining example of democracy and that Kenya could emulate Norway in order to succeed in its democratic endeavors. “Kenya and Norway share a common Jurisprudence of social justice and we can develop a partnership between Norwegian and Kenyan Judiciaries as well as training institutions.” said Dr. Mutunga.

Speaking on behalf of the chair of the Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution (CIC), Commissioner Catherine Mumo said that there was notable progress in the implementation of the new constitution in Kenya. However, the commissioner said that CIC was facing many challenges including; resistance to change by the status quo, lack of understanding by key players and a lack of capacity to implement the constitution. Ms Mumo also said that the constitution belonged to everyone and that it was the responsibility of every Kenyan to implement and abide by the constitution.

On her part, Ms Hilde Solbakken, Charge’ d’affaires, Norwegian embassy noted that she was inspired by Kenya’s new constitution. The diplomat said that as part of celebrating the independence of Norway from Danish rule, it was important also to reflect on Norway’s 200 year old constitution and their democratic journey as a whole. Ms Solbakken said that an intellectual dialogue on the distinct Kenyan and Norwegian constitution would be helpful in understanding when to defend or amend the new constitution.

Speaking at the same event, Prof. Bard Andreassen, from the University of Oslo observed that although the Kenyan and Norwegian constitution were unique and distinct, they shared a common denominator in promotion of the rule of law and democratic principles. Prof. Bard also noted that although having a constitution was good for any country, it was important for the leaders and citizens to uphold constitutionalism in order for the constitution to have substantial impact.

Representing the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Magoha, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs (DVC, AA) Prof. Henry Mutoro thanked everyone for having participated in the seminar. Prof. Mutoro said that caliber of the seminar reflected the status of the University of Nairobi as a truly world class institution of higher learning. The one day seminar was organized by the Center for Human Rights and Peace (CHRP), the department of philosophy and religious studies-University of Nairobi in conjunction with the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Nairobi.