

WANEP DEPLOYS ELECTION OBSERVERS TO SOUTH AFRICA

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) has deployed a team of observers to observe the April 22, 2009 general elections in South Africa. WANEP's presence in South Africa is at the invitation of African Centre for Conflict Resolution and Dialogue (ACCORD) in the framework of the newly created Alliance for African Peacebuilding (AfAP).

The South African Elections 2009 provides an ample opportunity to observe and critically assess the level of transparency and tolerance in an elections in which the ruling African National Congress (ANC) is expected to win. However the stakes in the elections include the fact that:

- The ANC is likely going to emerge winner but with what margin, given the divisions that emerged following the premature resignation of Thabo Mbeki as President following allegations of his involvement in attempts to bar Jacob Zuma from succeeding him as leader of the ANC.
- The formation of the splinter group under the banner of Congress of the People (COP) is expected to affect the political landscape in South Africa. Would the presence of COP and other existing political opposition parties hinder the ANC from gaining the two-thirds majority necessary to effect political changes without resort to alliances?
- The political tension within the country is a major cause for concern. Many factors explain this phenomenon, including the socio-economic concerns and the rising unemployment, effects of the world economic uncertainty and recent xenophobic attacks orchestrated by some youths. How would these factors influence the voting pattern?
- A typical example of gauging the level of tolerance is the case of the KwaZulu Natal Province where the Inkata Freedom Party of Chief Buthelezi would be struggling to consolidate its grip on its natural political fief in the face of a strong challenge from the ANC. WANEP's monitors are deployed in this peculiar constituency.

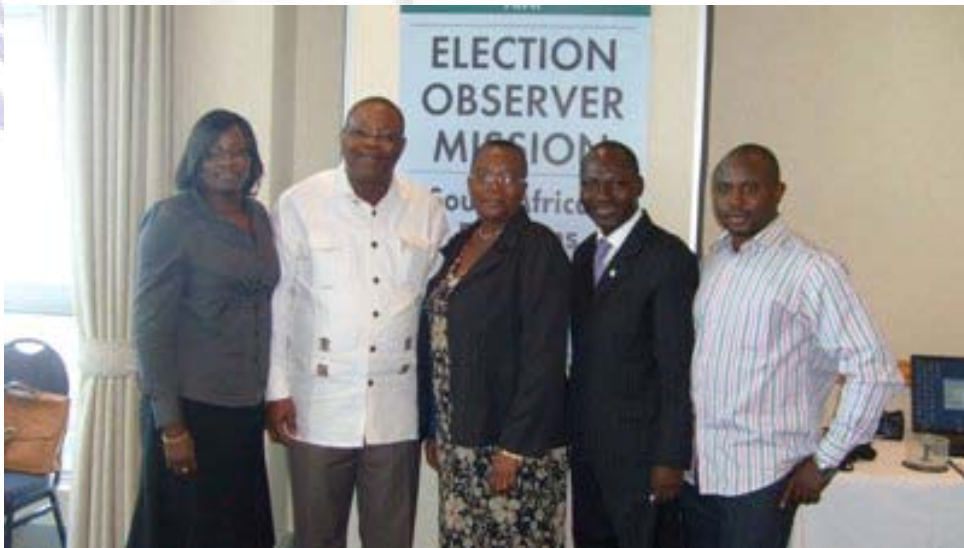
The idea of an alliance for African peacebuilding is motivated by the strong desire for African based organizations to create a viable continental synergy to maximize the resolve for Africans to take the lead in the critical quest for African solutions to African problems. AfAP is presently made up of WANEP (West Africa), ACCORD (Southern Africa) and Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI)-Africa (East and Central Africa).

Since April 14, 2009, the WANEP Observers together with their AfAP colleagues have so far undertaken a series of activities after the orientation sessions; WANEP observers' were deployed in Durban, Bergville, Escourt, Vryheid and Ulundi. Their mandate is to assess the levels of political intolerance and violence in Kwazulu Natal over the period of 18 April through 24 April 2009. The Observers are not mandated to observe the electoral process and are not allowed to give an interview to journalists. It has been planned that at the end of the process a pronouncement will be made by AfAP after receiving the reports from the fields.

This mission is going to enrich WANEP experiences towards election monitoring in West Africa and in the world. As team the team is prepared to fulfill its mandate let's wish to each member good luck and may Peace prevail.



Constant (left) with former Nigerian President OBASANJO and other Observers at Ulundi



WANEPs Team of Observers



Constant (2nd left) with others members of AFAP at Ulundi



Constant (standing 2nd from right) with the Municipal Electoral Officer of Ulundi and others members of AFAP

