

**21ST**

# **INTERNATIONAL ELECTORAL AWARDS & SYMPOSIUM CEREMONY**

Recognising excellence in  
electoral management

# INTERNATIONAL ELECTORAL AWARDS & SYMPOSIUM 21ST

1-4 OCTOBER 2025  
GABORONE – BOTSWANA

## PANELS

REAL-WORLD  
ELECTORAL  
CHALLENGES  
FROM BOTSWANA 2024  
LESSONS TO GLOBAL  
TRUST-BUILDING

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## DISCUSSION

VOICES FROM ACROSS  
THE GLOBE  
KEYNOTES

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## AWARDS

AN EVENING  
CELEBRATING  
INNOVATION AND  
EXCELLENCE IN  
DEMOCRACY

# ABOUT THE SYMPOSIUM

The 21st International Electoral Awards & Symposium arrives at a defining moment for global democracy. While 2024 was a record-breaking “super election year,” in which billions of citizens went to the polls, 2025 offers a different kind of significance. This year has seen fewer national elections than the year before, but it has revealed the enduring challenges facing democratic systems worldwide: the struggle to maintain electoral integrity in polarized societies, the difficulty of reaching and empowering first-time voters, the need to ensure inclusivity for women, youth and persons with disabilities, and the task of defending the information space from disinformation and manipulation.

Against this backdrop, the Symposium in Gaborone serves as both a reflection point and a forward-looking platform. Hosted at the Avani Hotel by the Independent Electoral Commission of Botswana in partnership with the International Centre for Parliamentary Studies (ICPS), it provides an arena where commissioners, practitioners, and experts from across the globe can gather to exchange perspectives, explore innovative approaches, and renew their collective commitment to credible elections.

The programme has been designed to balance structured learning with open deliberation. After arrivals and a welcome reception on Day 1, the Symposium opens formally on Day 2 with a ceremonial session that underscores the significance of the occasion, including national traditions alongside reflections from electoral leadership. This sets the tone for two days of intensive debate and exchange.

The first full day features a keynote on trust-building and integrity in electoral management, situating the conversation in the broader context of emerging democracies. Delegates then turn their attention to lessons drawn from Botswana’s 2024 general elections, exploring both opportunities and challenges that remain relevant far beyond the country’s borders. In the afternoon, attention shifts to inclusivity, with discussions on how electoral frameworks can be designed to enable the meaningful participation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities. The day concludes with a focus on technology: from digital tools that can transform voter education to industry voices showcasing innovation, followed by fringe events that encourage experimentation and dialogue in more informal formats.

Day 3 builds on this momentum with a renewed emphasis on global challenges. The morning examines contested electoral contexts, using recent experiences to highlight the complexity of rebuilding public confidence after years of political turbulence. A discursive session follows, allowing for candid dialogue between practitioners with different regional backgrounds on the broader political and social dynamics shaping

# ABOUT THE SYMPOSIUM

electoral participation.

The mid-morning panel explores approaches to improving trust in elections, with attention to transparency, accountability, and the role of international collaboration. This is complemented by keynotes later in the day that tackle the pressing issues of misinformation and the rise of generative AI, which present both risks and opportunities for the future of elections. Parallel industry demonstrations run alongside the formal agenda, providing a practical showcase of new technologies, tools, and services that are reshaping the way elections are administered.

In the evening, the focus turns to recognition and celebration. The International Electoral Awards Ceremony provides an opportunity to honour individuals, institutions, and commissions that have demonstrated exceptional commitment, innovation, and resilience in the advancement of democracy. This prestigious event combines cultural performance, dinner, and formal awards presentations, creating an atmosphere of both festivity and reflection.

The Symposium closes on Day 4 with an optional cultural tour for those with later departures, offering delegates the chance to experience Botswana's heritage before returning home.

Taken together, the Symposium and Awards constitute not only an exchange of knowledge but also a reaffirmation of the global democratic community's shared values. In a year that underscores the fragility as well as the resilience of electoral systems, the gathering in Gaborone stands as a reminder that innovation, cooperation, and dialogue remain essential to safeguarding democracy's future.

# ABOUT IEC

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of Botswana was established in 1997 under Section 65A of the Constitution. It is composed of seven members: the Chairperson, who must be a judge of the High Court, and one other member who must be a legal practitioner, both appointed by the Judicial Service Commission (JSC). The remaining five members are appointed by the JSC from a list of names recommended by the All-Party Conference.

While the Constitution does not expressly accord the Commission a separate legal personality or explicitly state its independence, the IEC plays a central role in Botswana's democratic process. Commissioners serve on a part-time basis and meet periodically to provide oversight and direction to the Secretary of the Commission, who serves as the head of the IEC and is appointed by the State President. The Secretariat, staffed largely by members of the public service, carries out the Commission's day-to-day work.

The responsibilities of the IEC are set out in the Constitution. Its mandate is to ensure the efficient, proper, free and fair conduct of parliamentary and local government elections and referenda. It is tasked with supervising elections, conducting referenda, and providing instructions and directions to the Secretary in carrying out their duties.



The IEC is also responsible for voter registration and the regulation of campaign expenses. However, the Commission does not have the power to delimit constituencies (a function carried out by a separate Delimitation Commission), to set election dates, or to issue writs of election. Likewise, the IEC does not adjudicate election disputes, which fall under the jurisdiction of the High Court.

The Secretariat, headed by the Secretary in accordance with Section 66 of the Constitution, provides the institutional backbone of the Commission, supporting its mission to uphold Botswana's long-standing democratic tradition. Through this structure, the IEC plays a vital role in safeguarding the integrity, inclusivity, and fairness of electoral processes in the country.

# DEAR COLLEAGUES



On behalf of the International Centre for Parliamentary Studies (ICPS), I am honoured to welcome you to the 21st International Electoral Symposium and Awards Ceremony here in Gaborone, Botswana.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the Independent Electoral Commission of Botswana for their partnership and invaluable support in co-hosting this year's event. Their commitment to democratic practice and to regional and international collaboration makes Botswana a fitting host for this important gathering.

For over two decades, ICPS has sought to provide a platform where Electoral Management Bodies, civil society, technology providers, and other global stakeholders can come together to share insights and strengthen democratic practice.

This Symposium continues that tradition – bringing diverse voices into dialogue and fostering practical innovation in the service of credible, inclusive, and transparent elections.

The year 2025 follows a record-breaking “super election year” in 2024, when nearly half the world's population went to the polls. This year fewer elections took place, but the challenges remain profound. Electoral authorities worldwide continue to grapple with questions of public trust, disinformation, inclusivity, and technological change.

Artificial intelligence is a clear example of this duality: a tool that can improve voter engagement, accessibility, and efficiency, but which also poses new risks through misinformation, manipulation, and cybersecurity vulnerabilities. Similarly, the integrity of electoral systems depends not only on innovations in technology but on the human capacity of election officials – well-trained, impartial, and prepared to safeguard democratic processes.

Over the coming days, this Symposium will provide the opportunity to examine these themes in depth. Thank you for joining us in Gaborone for what promises to be an engaging and impactful event. I trust you will find the discussions enriching and the Awards Ceremony a meaningful celebration of excellence in the service of democracy.

**Matt Gokhool**  
**CEO, ICPS**

# ABOUT ICPS

The International Centre for Parliamentary Studies exists to promote effective policymaking and good governance through enhanced interaction between Parliaments, governments and other stakeholders in society.

The Centre's primary focus is the empowerment of human capital through capacity building. To this end, the Centre organises a range of training programmes, conferences and policy discussions to address current public policy issues on the international stage, within Europe and in the UK. These provide a forum for policy discussion, debate, networking and consolidation of international best practice.

ICPS also provides a range of in-country consultancy services to public administrations and government agencies around the world that bring tangible and lasting change. Our consultancy services cover a range of areas including electoral affairs, regulation, governance, public sector reform, health and security.

We have worked with a variety of international organisations including the World Bank, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Council of Europe, the African Development Bank, the European Development Bank, the International Labour Organisation, the International Organisation for Migration,



## International Centre for Parliamentary Studies

USAID, and many UN bodies including the UNDP, UN Women and UNICEF.

We have also worked with a broad range of governments including the United Arab Emirates, South Africa, Kenya, the UK, Moldova, Saudi Arabia, Portugal, Lithuania, Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, the Turks and Caicos Islands, Bermuda, Sierra Leone, Kosovo, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Australia. We have trained more than 5,000 individuals and organisations in the last 4 years.

In addition, we are the publisher of The Government Gazette, a quarterly magazine which provides quality analytical and politically neutral coverage of the leading institutions and policymakers in the European Union.

# WEDNESDAY 1ST

## ARRIVAL & WELCOMING DRINKS

**10:00**

Arrival & Registration – this will happen across the day as delegates arrive and check in at the hotel.

**18:00**

Welcome Drinks & Entertainment – drinks reception for all delegates hosted by the Independent Electoral Commission of Botswana (IEC).



# THURSDAY 2ND

## SYMPOSIUM DAY ONE – MORNING

**08:30**

Symposium Registration

**09:00**

### **Opening & Welcoming Session**

Directors of Ceremonies – IEC & ICPS

- National Anthem – Botswana Police Service Band
- Prayer
- Introductions – District Commissioner
- Welcome Remarks – Hon Justice Barnabas Nyamadzabo, Chairman, Independent Electoral Commission of Botswana
- Official Opening – Advocate Duma Gideon Boko, President of the Republic of Botswana
- Remarks – CEO, International Centre for Parliamentary Studies (ICPS)
- Vote of Thanks – Commissioner Thebeyame T. Tsimako, IEC, Botswana

**10:00**

Group Photo

**10:15 – 10:30**

Coffee Break

**10:45 – 11:15**

### **Keynote Presentation – Trust-Building and Integrity in Emerging Democracies in Electoral Management**

Hon Justice Gaolapelwe Ketlogetswe, Chief Justice, Botswana

**11:30 – 12:30**

### **Morning Panel – Botswana 2024: Good Practices, Opportunities & Challenges**

Session Moderator – Commissioner Wame T. Danke, IEC, Botswana

- Jeff Siamisang, SIEC – Review of 2024 General Elections of Botswana: Perspectives from the Independent Electoral Commission of Botswana
- Prof David Sebudubudu – Perspectives from an academic

# THURSDAY 2ND

## SYMPOSIUM DAY ONE – AFTERNOON

**12:30 – 13:45**

Lunch Break – lunch will be available for delegates in the restaurant of the hotel.

**13:45 – 14:15**

**Keynote – Designing Inclusive Electoral Frameworks: Gender, Youth & Disability**

Maureen Shonge, Regional Policy Specialist – Women’s Political Participation, UN Women East & Southern Africa

**14:30 – 15:45**

**Afternoon Panel – From Access to Influence: Making Elections Truly Inclusive**

- Moderator - Commissioner Uyapo Ndadi
- Melatwork Hailu – Chairperson, National Election Board of Ethiopia
- Ms K. Molatlhwa – Botswana Coalition of Non-Governmental Organisations (BOCONGO)
- Executive Director – Federation of Disabled People’s Organisations, Botswana
- Ms Pamela Dube – Gender Links
- Helen G. Aguila-Flores – Commission on Elections, Philippines
- Industry Voice

**15:45 – 16:00**

Coffee Break

**16:00 – 16:30**

**Keynote – Digital Tools for Inclusive Voter Education**

Mr Kenneth Setimela – Founder & MD, LeveragePoint

**16:45 – 17:15**

Industry Voice Presentation

**17:15 – 18:00**

Fringe Events

# FRIDAY 3RD

## SYMPOSIUM DAY TWO

**09:00**

Symposium Opening

**09:00 – 10:00**

**Reflection from India**

- Dr Madhukar Gupta – State Election Commissioner of Rajasthan, State Election Commission
- Sri G. S. Sanghreshi – Commissioner, State Election Commission of Karnataka

**10:00 – 10:30**

**In Conversation**

- Lee Jung-ok – Former Minister of Gender Equality and Family, South Korea
- Joe Matthews – Founder-Publisher, Democracy Local

**10:45 – 11:45**

**Morning Panel – Improving Trust in Elections: Global Approaches & Tools**

- Commissioner Dr Gerson Sindano – Electoral Commission of Namibia
- Tamar Tsertsvadze – Central Election Commission of Georgia
- Dr. Federico Fahey – Electoral Management Institute Buenos Aires
- Industry Voice

**11:45 – 12:00**

Coffee Break

# FRIDAY 3RD

## SYMPOSIUM DAY TWO

**12:00 – 12:30**

**Keynote – Tackling Misinformation**

Sy Mamabolo – CEO, Electoral Commission of South Africa

**12:30 – 13:00**

**Keynote – Election Truth in the Age of AI-Generated Content**

Commissioner Thomas Hicks – United States EAC

**13:00**

Symposium Closing

**13:00**

Lunch

**19:00 – 22:00**

**The International Electoral Awards**

Dinner, entertainment & presentation of awards

Closing delivered by Hon. Moeti Caesar Mohwasa, Minister for State President, Republic of Botswana

# SATURDAY 4TH

## SIGHT SEEING TRIP & DEPARTURES

**10:00**

Departures and morning sight seeing. This day is reserved for delegates to go on a guided tour of Gaborone provided by the IEC, with departures scheduled throughout the day.



# SPEAKERS' BIOS



**Matt Gokhool**  
**Chief Executive**  
**International Centre for Parliamentary Studies**

Matt is the Chief Executive of the International Centre for Parliamentary Studies. He has extensive experience of both the private sector and the workings of government. He is a qualified Barrister and a member of the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple. He has previously held the position of Chief Executive of the Outer Territories of Mauritius, and the Chairman of the Prime Minister's Communication Cell.

Matt was a founder member of Parliamentary Communications, which is the largest parliamentary and political communication organization in Europe. In 2005, he was nominated Chief Executive of Huveaux Learning which was the result of the merger of Westminster Explained, Epic plc and Fenman, thus creating the largest independent trainer of the UK Civil Service. He is presently the Chairman of the International Centre for Electoral Psychology and has assisted numerous Heads of States and Heads of Governments in their endeavor to engage with the electorate and to sustain their democratic principles through the electoral process.



**Cesar Flores-Zavarce**  
**Consultant**  
**International Centre for Parliamentary Studies**

Cesar is a seasoned international electoral specialist with over 18 years of experience in electronic voting systems, biometric voter registration, and online voting. He has contributed to electoral processes in 20+ countries, collaborating with a variety of stakeholders including election bodies, political parties, and NGOs.

Previously at Smartmatic, Cesar led the expansion of election technologies worldwide, stationed across Asia Pacific, Europe, and Latin America. He now runs his consultancy, Valencia Consulting, and advises groups like ICPS. Cesar studied Economics at Munich and Augsburg universities, and Sociology at Universidad Católica Andrés Bello.

# SPEAKERS' BIOS



**Melatwork Hailu**  
**Chairperson**  
**National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE)**

Melatwork Hailu is the Chairperson of the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE). She brings extensive leadership experience from both the public and private sectors, having served the Board previously as CEO before her appointment as Chairperson.

Her career has spanned senior roles in law, governance, and administration. She founded and led a law office providing consultancy, mediation, and arbitration services to international and local organisations. These roles gave her a strong grounding in organisational leadership and policy implementation.

Hailu is a graduate of Harvard University, where she earned a Master's degree in Public Administration. She also holds a Master's degree in Peace and Security Studies and an LLB in Law from Addis Ababa University.



**Sy Mamabolo**  
**Chief Electoral Officer**  
**Election Commission of South Africa**

Sy is the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of the Electoral Commission, appointed in 2017, with nearly 20 years of experience in electoral administration. He has overseen eight elections since South Africa's democratic transition, including leading operations for the 2014 and 2016 elections.

Previously, he served as Provincial Electoral Officer for Gauteng and holds a BA and Master's in Management from the University of the Witwatersrand.

Rooted in student activism during the 1980s, his career reflects a commitment to public service and social justice. He has worked with diverse stakeholders and promoted credible elections internationally.

# SPEAKERS' BIOS



**Tamar Tsertsvadze**  
**Head of Human Resource Management and Labor Safety**  
**Central Election Commission of Georgia**

Tamar Tsertsvadze is the Head of Human Resource Management and Labor Safety at the Central Election Commission of Georgia. She oversees organizational strategy, recruitment, professional development, and compliance with labor safety standards, while also serving as the Commission's Quality Manager under ISO 9001:2015.

She is actively engaged in training election staff through the Center for Electoral Systems Development, Reforms, and Training, and contributes to advancing equality as a member of the CEC's Gender Equality Council.

Mrs. Tsertsvadze holds a Doctoral Degree in Management from the Caucasus University of Tbilisi, where she is also an Assistant Professor.



**Motshidisi Kenneth Setimela**  
**Founder**  
**LeveragePoint**

Motshidisi Setimela is the Founder of LeveragePoint, a Botswana-based firm advancing digital transformation across the SADC region. He has led major innovations in civic technology, finance, and eGovernment in Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, and Lesotho, and has designed election management systems to strengthen governance.

He has served with the SADC Election Observation Mission in seven elections, where he pioneered the Observer Management App, and under his leadership LeveragePoint is developing Botswana's first integrated Election Management System for the IEC.

Mr. Setimela holds an M.Phil. in Information & Knowledge Management from Stellenbosch University, a Bachelor of Information Systems, and executive training from Stanford. He continues to work with regional and international partners to promote data-driven governance and innovation in Africa.

# SPEAKERS' BIOS



**Dr. Madhukar Gupta**  
**State Election Commissioner, Election Commission of**  
**Rajasthan, India**

Madhukar is a Mason Fellow from Harvard University and has gained a global perspective with international expertise in areas like Public Administration, Public Policy Making, Environment, Disaster Management, and Health.

Gupta's contributions have been recognized on international platforms such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). His role has taken him to locations like Hawaii, George Washington University and several renowned Universities highlighting his global influence. He has engaged with prestigious international institutions, including the World Bank, UNDP, and the University of Maryland, sharing his insights on critical subjects. His expertise and contributions have transcended borders, making him a notable international figure.



**Thomas Hicks**  
**Commissioner**  
**U.S. Election Assistance Commission**

Thomas was confirmed by unanimous consent of the United States Senate on December 16, 2014 to serve on the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC). Prior to his appointment with the EAC, he served on the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on House Administration from 2003 to 2014. Mr. Hicks recently completed the Election Center and Auburn University's Certified Elections/Registration Administrator (CERA) program. He received his J.D. from the Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law and his B.A. in Government from Clark University (Worcester, MA).

# SPEAKERS' BIOS



**Professor Jung-ok Lee**  
**Professor of Sociology at Daegu Catholic University and**  
**former Minister of Gender Equality and Family, South**  
**Korea**

Professor Jung-ok Lee is an Emeritus Professor of Sociology at Daegu Catholic University and a former Minister of Gender Equality and Family in South Korea. She has held numerous leadership roles in government and civil society, including Co-Chairperson of the Gender Equality Committee at the Ministry of Defense, member of the Seoul Metropolitan Public Activity Promotion Committee, and advisor within the Prime Minister's Office on civil society development.

She has served on the boards of Transparency International Korea, Eco Peace Asia, DMZ Life and Peace Valley, and the Women, Peace and Security Forum. Internationally, she has been active in the Community of Democracies NGO Forum, Democracy International, and UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Centre for International Understanding.

Professor Lee has been a visiting scholar at Waseda University and Harvard University, and has authored and edited numerous works on globalization, gender, democracy, and civic participation.



**Dr. Gerson Sindano**  
**Commissioner**  
**Electoral Commission of Namibia**

Dr. Gerson Sindano is an Electoral Commissioner at the Electoral Commission of Namibia, where he plays a key role in safeguarding the integrity of electoral processes and promoting free and fair elections. Alongside his public service, he is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Namibia, combining academic leadership with practical experience in electoral management.

He is a strong advocate for transparency, accountability, and civic engagement, reflecting his belief in the importance of empowering citizens and strengthening Namibia's democratic culture.

# SPEAKERS' BIOS



**Maureen M Shonge**  
**UN Women East and Southern Africa Regional Office**  
**(ESARO), Nairobi, Kenya**

Maureen Shonge is the Regional Policy Specialist on Political Participation in the Governance Section at UNWomen's East and Southern Africa Regional Office. She has over 15 years of experience working on governance issues, access to justice, promoting women's political participation including civil society and parliamentary strengthening. Extensive experience in program design and implementation, policy analysis, knowledge generation, to promote women's leadership and decision-making. Strong background in advocacy for the prevention of violence against women in politics.



**Joe Mathews**  
**Renovating Democracy fellow at Berggruen Institute and**  
**Professor of Practice, School of Politics and Global**  
**Studies, Arizona State University**

Joe Mathews is a journalist, the founder-publisher of Democracy Local, a planetary publication on local governance, and a democracy fellow at the Berggruen Institute.

He is author of 4 books, including *The People's Machine: Arnold Schwarzenegger and the Rise of Blockbuster Democracy* (2006), and *The U.S. vs. US: Essays From California As It Leaves America* (2025).

Since 2008, Joe has been co-president of the Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy, organizing 13 free, public forums across 5 continents. He is a member of Democracy International, IOPD, Democracy R&D network, and The Harvard Crimson graduate council.

Previously, Joe was a reporter at the LA Times, Wall Street Journal, and Baltimore Sun; and senior fellow at New America Foundation. Raised in Beijing and L.A., Joe lives and coaches youth baseball in Southern California.

# SPEAKERS' BIOS



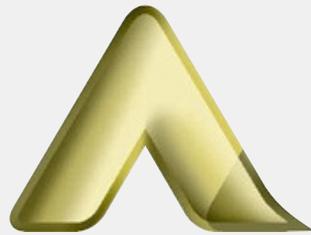
**Helen G. Aguila-Flores**  
**Deputy Executive Director for Administration**  
**Philippine Commission on Elections**

Helen is the Deputy Executive Director for Administration (DEDA) at the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) in the Philippines. A lawyer by profession, she oversees multiple key committees, including the Regular Bids and Awards Committee, Financial Assistance, and Printing of Official Ballots. She also champions Pillar I of COMELEC's Strategic Plan and serves as Vice-Chairperson for ballot printing.

Helen holds degrees in Psychology and Law and has specialized training in Election Management from South Korea's Korean Civic Education Institute and a Public Management Development Program certification from the Development Academy of the Philippines.



**Dr. Federico Fahey**  
**Electoral Management Institute Buenos Aires**



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Steel leaving behind The Mark Of Trust, forever!

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