

Call for Papers



Reimagining Constitutionalism in Africa: Balancing State Capacity and Non-State Governance

**African Network of
Constitutional Lawyers
(ANCL)
Biennial Conference on
Constitutional Law**

10-13 June 2026

University of Ilorin, Nigeria



AFRICAN NETWORK OF CONSTITUTIONAL LAWYERS
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Background and Rationale

Since independence, African states have grappled with the challenge of constructing legitimate, effective and resilient governance systems. While constitutional systems have increasingly become important means of regulating public power and social relations, low and/or declining public trust in politics and state institutions continue to undermine constitutional legitimacy and state capacity, and in some places to generate instability. In this context, some African countries have achieved relatively stable and functional political systems, while much of the continent remains fragile, in some cases under long-time authoritarian and military leaders. In all cases, popular satisfaction with the performance of their state institutions remains questionable. Young people across the continent are demanding better, accountable governance that is responsive to their needs and aspirations.

Simultaneously, non-state actors, including civil society, traditional authorities, and faith-based institutions, remain influential forces in shaping governance outcomes. These actors often operate in spaces where state institutions are weak or absent, raising critical questions about the nature of authority, legitimacy, and constitutional order in Africa.

The African Union's Agenda 2063, particularly Aspiration 3 on good

governance, democracy, human rights, justice, and the rule of law, underscores the urgency of rethinking constitutional frameworks to reflect Africa's pluralistic realities. Emerging technologies offer opportunities and pose challenges to constitutional governance, with implications to the capacity, performance and legitimacy of state institutions.

The 2026 edition of the ANCL Biennial Conference seeks to interrogate the evolving relationship between constitutional stability, state capacity, and non-state governance, while exploring the epistemological foundations of African constitutional thought.

Key Questions

- What is the relationship between state legitimacy and capacity, and the design and operation of formal constitutional systems in Africa?
- How do non-state actors contribute to or challenge constitutional legitimacy in Africa?
- Can African constitutionalism be reimagined to integrate indigenous values and governance models?
- How do traditional and faith-based institutions interact with formal constitutional structures?
- How can constitutional frameworks better protect vulnerable groups and promote inclusive governance?

- What role can technology and artificial intelligence play in reshaping governance and legal institutions, and harnessing it towards state effectiveness and legitimacy?

Lines of Inquiry

Axis 1: Indigenous Governance and Constitutional Legitimacy

- Exploration of traditional governance systems and their relevance to modern constitutional frameworks.
- Case studies on hybrid governance models that integrate non-state actors into constitutional processes.

Axis 2: Inclusive Constitutionalism

- Mechanisms to address winner-takes-all politics and promote accountable

and responsive governance, particularly in view of the demands of Africa's youth.

- Gender equity, persons with disabilities and the protection of marginalized communities within constitutional frameworks.
- Legal education and its role in shaping constitutional consciousness.

Axis 3: Technology, Security, and Resource Governance

- The impact of artificial intelligence and digital governance on constitutional institutions.
- Constitutional responses to resource management, security challenges, and decentralization.



Axis 4: Decolonial Constitutional Thought

- Reflection on the legacy of colonial legal paradigms and the possibilities for conceptual decolonization.
- Reimagining constitutionalism through African epistemologies and jurisprudential innovation.

Axis 5: Judicial Integrity and State Capacity

- Analysis of judicial independence, public trust, and the role of courts in democratic consolidation.
- Comparative studies on constitutional adjudication and electoral dispute resolution.

Submission Guidelines

- Abstracts: 250–300 words
- Deadline for submission: 31 December 2025
- Notification of acceptance: 16 January 2026 (Only accepted abstracts will be contacted)

- Full paper submission deadline: 1 April 2026
- Format: Times New Roman, 12pt, 1.5 spacing
- Submission email:
secretariat@ancl-radc.org.za

Participation and Support

The conference welcomes submissions from scholars, practitioners, judicial officials, and public intellectuals across Africa and beyond. Contributions with a gender perspective and from underrepresented groups are especially encouraged.