Communicating in Troubled Times: A Conversation on Media and Democracy Ahead of the 2017 elections

<u>Rift Valley Institute, Seminar Room, 24 August 2016</u>

Traditional and digital media play a significant role in conflicts that accompany and follow transitions to democracy. The way they interact with political and civil society actors is determinant in framing particularly critical moments in the political history of a country, such as contested elections or controversial campaigns. The nexus of media, politics and civil society can determine the possibility to stymie the risk of violence or hold authorities or security forces to account. The aim of this workshop is to bring together political authorities, journalists, civil society activists and academics to discuss the nexus of media and politics against the backdrop of the 2013 political elections and the 2014 anti-terror operation Usalama Watch, while looking ahead to the 2017 elections. The three roundtables will encourage a dialogue and discussion about "what went right" and "what went wrong" during these critical events that tested the resilience of Kenyan democracy. Moreover, by highlighting critical issues, the discussion will likely offer insights and food for thought ahead of 2017 elections.

9.00 Welcome and Introductions

9.15- 10.45 Panel 1: Journalist ethics and practices

This panel will examine the role of both traditional and online media in democratisation conflicts. It will pay special attention to the interplay of ethical issues, political sensitivities, market orientation and technological innovation against the background of the 2013 political elections and 2014 Operation Usalama Watch. The aim of this panel is to reconstruct and elicit a reflection on how Kenyan media, on the one hand, tackled the risk of political violence in 2013; on the other, framed the anti-terror campaign launched by the Kenyan Government and mainly targeting the local Somali refugee population.

- Hamza Egal - *Blogger, Human Rights activist and initiator of the campaign*

#KenyaImNotaTerrorist
- Patrick Gathara - *Political blogger/cartoonist*
- Buraan Cade - *Founder of Eastleighwood*
- John Sibi Okumu - *Journalist, Media and Communication Consultant*

Gianluca Iazzolino - *MeCoDem Researcher, University of Oxford* (*Moderator*)

10.45 - 11.00 - Tea Break

11.00 - 12.30 Panel 2: Role of Activists and Civil Society Organizations
This panel will discuss examples of activism and civil society mobilisation aimed at fostering civic dialogue and political accountability. Panellists will examine the role of activist and advocacy organisations in drawing attention to underreported topics and contributing to the public debate. It will also highlight the significance of ICTs and social media in recent cases of civic engagement in Kenya.

- Kyalo Mwengi – *NCIC Commission*
- Shukri Islow – *Gender and Youth Activist*
- Atieno Ndomo - *Political and Social Analyst and Commentator*
- Abdi Yussuf - *Leader, Somali Bantu in Eastleigh*
- Wilfred Olal - *Bunge la Mwananchi*

Jacinta Maweu – *MeCoDem Researcher and Lecturer, University of Nairobi* (*Moderator*)

2.00 – 4.00 Panel 3: Political Authorities Communication Practices in Conflict
This panel will examine the way politicians and authorities communicated and listened to their constituencies and citizens during the 2013 elections and 2014 Usalama Watch. The panellists will contribute to the reflection on political communication and governance.

- Hon. Yusuf Hassan Abdi – *MP for Kamukunji Constituency*
- Samson Omondi - *Kenya National Commission on Human Rights*
- Tom Wolfe - *IPSOS*
- Bernard Mulwa - *Tumalize Umaskini Trust*
- Tony Muchama - *Journalist, Author - Standard Newspaper*

Nicole Stremlau - *Head of PCMLP, MeCoDem Researcher, University of Oxford* (*Moderator*)