



ORPP in the News

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Registrar of political Parties, J. C. Lorionokou in KBC TV Eye on Politics Show, 7 – 8 am



Link: <https://www.youtube.com/live/yRVQP6QlfKg?si=8ZOYNb0q6tQeNGT7>

Transcript (edited version)

HOST:

Welcome back and thank you so much for staying with us. Today is the 24th day of November 2025. Welcome back to Good Morning Kenya. And it's Monday. Eye on politics begins right now. Okay. In studio I have the boss who is taking care of the Office of the Registrar Political Parties in Kenya. I want us to have a conversation beyond the political parties and what it really means as per the Constitution of Kenya and the constitution of the political parties. We have got 91 registered political parties in the country. And I want us take a look at really what lies in that office and what he's up to. He's the new sheriff in town and how intense to walk that journey in Kenya. John Cox, Lorionokou is the man at the helm of that office. Thank you so much for joining us.

Allow me to ask this question. When you first got the call to lead the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties, how did it feel to step into that role?

REGISTRAR:

Oh, well - how does it feel?

Of course, it's an office I've been familiar with for some time. I've been in the political field for a while, and I come from managing elections. So, stepping into this role came with an understanding of what the space demands.

And how it feels?

It's a role filled with a lot of activity, a diversity of personalities, and many moving parts. You have to constantly engage, constantly learn, and constantly adapt. It's demanding, but it is also meaningful because you're contributing to shaping our democracy.

HOST:

Yes.

REGISTRAR:

So just an officer I knew there's work to do, so. And I'm prepared for that.

HOST:

What are some of the work that you really need to do because Kenya is enjoying multiparty politics ever since the repeal of section 2A. The Constitution of Kenya 2010 is quite elaborate. How are you prepared to handle us as Kenyans?

REGISTRAR:

I think that's an important point - that we are beneficiaries of the repeal of Section 2A. Beyond that, our 2010 Constitution is very clear. Article 4(2) states that Kenya *shall be a multi-party democratic state*. That is a constitutional guarantee.

But even more importantly, it says that our democracy must be founded on national values and principles of good governance. That is where our office comes in, to help translate that constitutional aspiration into reality.

How do we actually become a multi-party democratic state?

By allowing people to exercise their rights under Article 38, which provides for the formation and participation in political parties. Every Kenyan has that right.

Our office exists to facilitate this process, enabling Kenyans of like minds to come together and create for themselves an avenue to be heard within the democratic space of this country. It is through such avenues that citizens can organize, articulate their interests, and participate meaningfully in shaping the direction of our democracy.

HOST:

Okay, talk about democratic space. I mean, Kenyans value multiparty democracy. And that is what we drink, sleep, walk, talk. Everything is politics. But do you think that to that extent very few people are actually close to the political parties?

REGISTRAR:

I think it's an issue of understanding and creating awareness. I think we sometimes think of democracy, you know, the way we want it.

And if we look at our constitution, I think it gives us parameters for how this democracy will function. And I've just told you that it says that this multiparty democracy must be voted on, certain values must be governed by principles of good governance. And so, part of what we need to understand is how do we participate in creating this democracy. And part of that participation is being part and parcel of formation and members of these political parties. I do believe that we cannot have a democratic country without having a democratic politician. And that is the foundation of how our democracy can be built up.

So, these parties have to be first given an opportunity to exist and then build them up to be able to exercise that democracy within themselves in the way they are formed, in the way they are run, in the way they function in order for us to be able to realize, you know, the democratic space we are talking about. So the office actually is there to try and strengthen the parties to be able to realize that democracy within the parties themselves.

Of course, we have a very strong background of regions and tribalism because that is how we are formed as a country. And those are not necessarily bad things because they give us a background on how to build up. But when we need to build ourselves to a more inclusive society where all of us belong and all of us agree on certain values, that we can say this is what we believe in and we can move forward.

HOST:

How is Wanjiku related to the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties? Wanjiku is you and I, the common Kenyan.

REGISTRAR:

Now, in my view, the existence of the political parties is not just for existence's sake. It is for the purpose of Wanjiku to participate in making choices for himself or herself. And that is why we feel as an office that our regulation of the political parties is in preparation for them to be able to serve Wanjiku better. You know, sometimes people think that registering a party, you just wake up and register a party.

HOST:

There's a whole procedure about that.

REGISTRAR:

It's a whole procedure. It's not just a simple procedure. I can tell you. I said there are 91 political parties and counting. We have 27. I just gave two certificates last week. We have 27 provisionally registered political parties that if they can work through now and October next year, we could have 100 plus. But some of those parties have 27.

HOST:

Provisionally registered political parties on top of the 91.

REGISTRAR:

Yes, 91 are the fully registered. Those ones are the ones that are participating in elections now.

The 27 have fulfilled the preliminary stages of registering a political party, but they are not yet fully registered.

So that means they are basically, you know, submitted their constitutions, they have submitted the ideologies and submitted their basic requirements. But then they have up 270 days for them to be able to, you know, fill all the other requirements that they need to be able to be fully registered. And that's by October next year. If they all qualify, then we'll have 118. When a party registers, some of those requirements that they have is that they need to be seen to have the face of Kenya. You know what the face of Kenya means?

They need to have presence in the 47 counties that we have, because this is not a section of Kenya, it's the whole of Kenya. They need to have inclusivity in the way they form their structures. So all these 91 have gone through all that process. They have structured themselves the way the constitution defines how we should be represented.

According to Article 92 of the Constitution, we should have a country that everybody is included. You know, we are all considered to be the same - of the same interests and should be able to meet our interests through these political parties. The requirements for a party is so intense that they take a lot of time to prepare for that.

So, to have you register a party, you have to be ready to actually accommodate everybody else. Because this is not just for you. It's for the interest of Kenyans. It's for the interest of Wanjiku, Otieno and everybody else. The party is not just for the person registering, it's for everybody else who is in this country.

HOST:

I'm just trying to imagine when you have got 91 political parties fully registered and you have got 27 more to come, there is that aspect of party funding. How do you handle this? Because then it means that each and every political party has that inherent right to benefit from the political parties fund.

REGISTRAR:

Well, that's not correct. There are provisions for political party funding which is part of what this office is to do. And that has been given some structure. Parties that benefit right now from the political party funding, there are 48.

HOST:

What is the threshold?

REGISTRAR:

One - They have to be able to participate in elections and have elected members. And not just that, they have to actually show that in that participation they have members of the special interest groups who have gotten into elective positions and elected.

And then we also have other conditions like - how many votes across board of all the elective positions that the party has garnered in elections.

So, it is not just that having a party that gets the party the funding. You know, you have to show that you have actively participated in elections and created representation. Of course, as an office, we think about how to strengthen these parties so that they're able to basically function at a minimal stage. It's such a discussion that we are taking right now.

HOST:

Do we have any effect? Perhaps somebody would ask any dominance by the executive over the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties.

REGISTRAR:

The Office of the Registrar of Political Parties is of course a state office, but it is an independent office because its role is very much defined in the Political Parties Act. We are not controlled by any state executive body or anybody because our role is to register, to regulate and supervise the activities and functions of political parties. That is for all political parties, whether they are in government or not in government. The office is not controlled or geared to work according to the intentions of the executive in whichever way.

HOST:

Let's come back to what is current right now. I think it's also highlighted on the front page of local dailies. Of course, we have got by elections coming up. Are you concerned about what's happening across the country? The violence that we are experiencing, some red flags that you can see from there?

REGISTRAR:

Of course, as a Kenyan, I am very concerned. We should never have to shed blood during elections. This is a critical time, and in the month or so that I've been in office, I've consistently said that a significant part of our focus as we prepare for the 2027 General Election must be on political parties. They are central players in both general elections and by-elections. We need to engage them so they take ownership of the process and accept responsibility for how it unfolds.

We come from a political history marked by tension, and political parties have a major role to play in changing that. As an office, part of our work is to strengthen internal dispute resolution mechanisms within political parties. This is important because many of the issues that later escalate into national crises originate within the parties themselves. By the time these disputes reach the election period, they are already out of control.

Our goal is to reinforce party structures so that conflicts are addressed and resolved internally, creating a more peaceful environment by the time we get to elections. I am concerned because we must start engaging these parties now. In Kenya, politics begins the day after elections, and the cycle continues. We need to manage that culture so that while politics remains an important part of our national life, it is conducted in a way that preserves peace and ensures the continuity of our democracy.

HOST:

Okay. Talk of politics. I mean, we have got electoral challenges that we face as a country and one of them is the violence. Some two candidates were actually fined by the IEBC last week because of the violence that was experienced. But let's talk about the impunity that is shrouding our electoral space in the country and of course the perception out there that, you know, anytime we go for election, it's not going to be free. It's not going to be fair. I know you work hand in hand with the IEBC, but how are you intending to change this perception? Because Wanjiku must be given that assurance that all is okay.

REGISTRAR:

Well, I think that's an issue for IEBC, and I'm sure they are prepared to make sure that the election is free and fair. Our responsibility as an office is preparing the parties for election.

HOST:

Yes.

REGISTRAR:

And of course, we collaborate closely with the IEBC in many areas. In fact, our work begins

even earlier than theirs, because we start with political parties at the stage of party primaries. We help to moderate that process to ensure that parties are conducting their primaries in accordance with their own constitutions.

Every political party has a constitution that outlines how it will operate, as well as nomination rules that specify how leaders will be selected for elections. They also have internal organs responsible for addressing disputes that may arise. Our responsibility as an office is to hold parties accountable to what they have committed to in their own documents: their constitutions, their nomination rules, and the mandates of their governing bodies.

This is part of how we prepare political parties for elections. Once that stage is complete, the parties then become clients of the IEBC for the general election or any by-elections. However, we still continue to monitor them to ensure they follow their own constitutions and rules so that we can enforce compliance.

But when it comes to the conduct of the actual election, that responsibility lies entirely with the IEBC, as they are empowered by law to manage that process within the legal framework.

HOST:

How are you handling economic pressures?

REGISTRAR:

Economic pressures are everywhere. It's a challenge for all Kenyans and for all institutions. What we try to do is make the most of the opportunities available to us. No political party can succeed without support from others, and the same applies to our office, we also depend on collaboration with other institutions and structures to fulfill our mandate.

We have a constitutional responsibility to Kenyans, and even though the economic environment is difficult, that does not mean we stop or slow down. We continue with our work, leveraging the support and partnerships we have to ensure we deliver on our mandate.

HOST:

Amazing. But then, you know, when you, when you look at your role as the office, you are

doing your bit. But do you have a feeling or do you think that the political party leaders are also playing the same role to enhance democracy in the country?

REGISTRAR:

From where I sit, I believe political parties are genuinely making an effort. Before you fully understand what it takes to establish and run a party, it might appear as though they are falling short, but in reality, there is a lot they are working hard to achieve. Part of our role is to reduce the influence of personal interests within parties so that they evolve into institutions grounded in ideology and focused on issues rather than individuals.

So that then it addresses, you know, the citizens.

HOST:

Is it the real case? They say different.

REGISTRAR:

And so part of what we are doing, as I told you, is trying to strengthen the internal party structures. I will give you two examples. First, one of the requirements for parties is inclusion. We need parties to show us that they have youth, women, and persons with disabilities, and that these groups are able to voice themselves.

Let's take the current situation, for example, the Gen Z movement we are seeing in the country. Part of the challenge is: where do they find themselves within the parties? Do they feel like they have a place? What we are trying to do is build the parties to be more accommodative to these groups: youth, women, and persons with disabilities, so that they have a voice. They should not have to get outside the parties to feel heard. They should be heard within their own parties, and that is the most democratic way to do it, as opposed to having to express themselves on the streets or in other spaces.

We want that voice to come from inside. And when information comes from within the party structures, it holds people more accountable.

The second thing we are trying to do as an office is to provide information to the public. I'm sure some of us may not even know how political parties function. Many people don't even know the

rules of these political parties. And you know, lack of information means you cannot hold anybody accountable if you have no information.

So, as an office, we are trying to expand the space for public access to information about political parties. We are actually thinking about how to get the public to know: How do you register a party? What do you require? How does a party run? How does a party conduct elections for its officials?

This is important so that parties are not just run by a few people, but by the public that actually owns them. Because I believe all parties are owned by the people of Kenya. Every party is supposed to have about 1,000 members from at least half of the counties, which is 24 counties, meaning 1,000 members from each county. These are the real owners of the party, and we need them to understand how the party functions.

If we can have that information out there, then we will have a bigger base of accountability in terms of how parties function. That builds democracy, because more people will be holding leaders accountable for what they do, and holding the country accountable for how it functions - because they understand how things should work.

HOST:

You know, we are enjoying democracy, and that's why you and I can have this conversation freely and talk about democracy and everything in between. But do Kenyans really understand what political parties stand for? That is question one, question number two related to that. Where does Kenya stand when it comes to democratic space in Africa, continentally? Where do we stand?

REGISTRAR:

Do Kenyans understand what political parties stand for? I think that is a very long story. If you go back to how we have grown as a country, we carry a lot of historical baggage regarding what political parties mean. We came from a one-party state, where one person defined everything for everybody. Building from that history, we now need to break the notion that political parties belong to individuals. They don't, because the process of forming and running a party involves everyone else.

So yes, there is a level of ignorance about how political parties should work and how they should function. That is why I said we need to create more space for information, so that we can help Kenyans understand what it means to have a political party and how that party should operate.

Where does Kenya stand in terms of democracy in Africa? Let me start from where we are as an office. We are not very old, the Political Parties Act came into force in 2011. But even within that short time, we have had a lot of interest from other countries wanting to come and see how we manage political parties in Kenya.

HOST:

So we are. That's good.

REGISTRAR:

We are not there, but I think we've made a lot of progress. I usually say my first experience with elections was the last mlolongo system. I don't know if you know what mlolongo system is?

HOST:

I know.

REGISTRAR:

Yes, yes. And when I look back to that time and compare it with where we are now, we have made a lot of progress. We may not be perfect, and we may not have everything right, but if we keep reminding ourselves of where we want to go, the first step is understanding where we currently stand. From there, we can focus on how to move toward our goals.

In terms of democracy, I think we already have the knowledge and understanding of what needs to be put in place. It is now a matter of taking action, saying, "Let's do it," and moving ourselves in the right direction. And when you look at democracy in the region, we can compare ourselves with some of our neighbours, who I won't mention, and see that we have come a long way.

HOST:

We are coming along. But come to think of it, you know, you have a very hard nut to crack as the office. But the question is, do you have got some resource and capacity challenges that you're facing?

REGISTRAR:

Yes, I would say definitely, we face a lot of resource challenges as an office. Even now, we are not fully established. We have personnel gaps, and resources in general remain a major challenge. That is why we continue urging the government to honour its commitments, especially the Political Parties Fund. The Constitution provides for the fund at 0.03%, but we rarely receive the full amount. We often get only a small fraction, around 0.1-something percent, which limits our ability to strengthen political parties.

As an establishment, we are only about 39–40% staffed, which means our capacity to make an impact is very limited. Outside Nairobi, we currently have 13 branches, far below our goal of having offices in all 47 counties. We believe that to effectively reach the public, we must be physically present in every county so that people have a place they can walk into, ask questions, and access information. Yes, we have a website and online platforms, but not everyone can access services through those channels. So those gaps significantly limit how far we can extend our services.

HOST:

Let's take a break. When you come back, I still want us to have much more because we are enjoying this space. Courtesy of the 2010 Constitution. And I just want to ask you, what are you going to do? Do you have some of the policies that that you are putting in place to strengthen your office and the democratic space that we are enjoying? Stay with us much more after this.

(interlude)

If you're just joining us, you have missed a lot about the political parties. Actually, we are learning so much here. I'm with John Cox Lorionokou, who is the Registrar of Political Parties

telling us what you really need to understand. Now let me come back to the political parties funding before I forget about it.

What is the threshold? So, you are a political party, you are registered, but I know there are plenty of steps that one should go through to access the funding. Perhaps just one or two you can highlight for us.

REGISTRAR:

Yes, I did mention that the Fund has a clear structure in terms of how it is supposed to be allocated. Constitutionally, it is set at 0.03%, but as I've said, we have never received the full amount. Whatever percentage we do receive is then distributed among parties based on several criteria.

First, allocation depends on the number of votes a party receives in a general election. It also considers the number of elected representatives a party has across all categories, as well as the extent to which the party has representation from special interest groups. In addition, about 5% of the Fund is set aside for administration since our office manages the Fund on behalf of the political parties.

Because the Fund is never fully financed, distribution becomes a challenge. The parties end up receiving less than they need, which weakens their capacity to carry out their internal processes effectively. The Fund is designed to help parties build their internal structures and prepare to participate meaningfully in elections, which is why inclusivity is such an important requirement.

There is also another issue: if a party does not meet the required threshold, particularly having at least one elected representative, then it cannot benefit from the Fund at all. That is the first qualification. A party must have at least one elected member from any of the six elective positions, President, Governor, Senator, Member of the National Assembly, Woman Representative, or Member of the County Assembly. If a party secures none of these positions, it is automatically excluded from accessing the Fund even before the other requirements are considered.

HOST:

Okay, you know, you need to be carrying out civic education. I know there's another body which is also mandated to do that, but how are you handling this so that the party structures, the party organs, the party leaders and Wanjiku are in tandem?

REGISTRAR:

As I mentioned earlier, civic education is one of our key areas of focus. Civic education is essentially about giving the public, and even party members themselves, the information they need to understand how political parties work.

As an office, we are using all the avenues available to us. One of them is opportunities like the one you've given me today, where we can communicate directly to the public about how parties function. Another approach is working with our partners to help us reach specific groups, such as youth and women at the grassroots level, and provide them with accurate information about political parties and the role of our office.

However, as I've said before, we currently have only 13 branches. That limits our ability to reach the entire public as effectively as we would like. But our long-term goal is to eventually reach people in all 47 counties, ensuring everyone has access to information about political parties, how they operate, why they matter, and how this directly shapes their lives as citizens. Ultimately, civic education contributes not only to our democratic development but also to our broader economic and governance environment.

HOST:

Structure and all that we are advancing? And we are. I mean, the era right now is AI and digital era. How are you trying to, you know, weed out fraudulent registrations or the political parties? Because now someone can just wake up in the middle of nowhere and, you know, pick a few people, open an office somewhere and says, I'm a Fully registered political party. How are you handling this?

REGISTRAR:

That's an important question. Historically, we did face challenges where people could simply assemble a group, collect ID numbers, and claim to be a political party. Those concerns have stayed in the public's mind for a long time. However, the situation has changed significantly.

From around 2017 to 2021, we had cases of fraudulent or non-consensual registrations. But since then, we've built a very robust system for managing political parties. It's called the Integrated Political Parties Management System (IPPMS). This system allows parties to register members and also allows individuals to register themselves, whether through eCitizen or by dialing *509#.

What has truly been a game changer is that no one can be registered into a political party without their consent. If someone tries to input your ID number into a party's system, you will immediately receive a notification asking you to approve or decline the request. Similarly, if I want to join a political party, the party itself must also consent to my membership. This creates a fully secure, end-to-end process.

We've completely eliminated the earlier problem of people being unknowingly registered into parties. The Data Protection Act has also strengthened this process, because personal information can no longer be used without explicit permission.

IPPMS has further improved transparency by giving parties access to their own membership registers. They can see how many members they have, and every two weeks we send updates showing how many people have resigned from the party. That way, they can track changes and plan their recruitment strategies.

These are progressive measures we are implementing to ensure that no one is registered without their knowledge, and to prevent parties from being formed or expanded through fraudulent means. The system ensures that all membership is voluntary, verified, and fully accountable.

HOST:

Let's just come back and talk about the issue to do with the internal party disputes. And many political parties are actually grappling with that. You'll find that some of them will jump the gun,

either head to the courts or tribunals and all that. And because of that trust deficit that they have as political parties, that would really give you a lot of pressure as an office, to iron out issues that you think that they should have handled through their internal party organs.

REGISTRAR:

Absolutely, and that is why I mentioned earlier that one of our key focus areas is strengthening the internal dispute-resolution mechanisms within political parties. The goal is to reduce the escalation of internal disagreements to external bodies such as the Political Parties Dispute Tribunal.

We have taken deliberate steps by creating training programs specifically for internal dispute tribunals within parties. All 91 registered political parties have an internal dispute-resolution committee responsible for handling issues arising from within the party, whether related to party primaries, nominations, or other internal matters.

Beyond that, every party has structures designed to manage conflicts: delegates conferences, national governing councils, election committees, and so on. These organs are supposed to help resolve issues before they spill outside.

If we can keep disputes within the party framework, we prevent a lot of unnecessary conflict. Often when members are dissatisfied internally, they seek external avenues to express their grievances. That, in turn, creates a new level of conflict, either publicly or across party lines. Strengthening internal mechanisms is therefore essential.

In the long term, we must also appreciate that differences of ideology within parties are normal. Democracy doesn't mean everyone agrees; it means we respect divergent opinions and still operate within the same political home. If two members disagree, it shouldn't mean one of them must leave the party. We need to cultivate that maturity.

Currently, the intolerance we see at the national level reflects the intolerance inside parties. Members often feel that if someone doesn't share their view, that person should leave. But real democracy means saying, *"We differ, but we can still belong to the same party."*

We look forward to building parties that operate as permanent institutions, vehicles that continue regardless of who joins or leaves. A party shouldn't collapse because an individual exits. Institutionalized parties that endure over time are the foundation of a stable and progressive democracy.

HOST:

Okay, let's talk about political parties and socioeconomic development in the country. How do political parties enhance that?

REGISTRAR:

Governance is something that must be nurtured, even at the individual level. Our Constitution deliberately requires political parties to be founded on national values and principles of good governance. This is because the same parties are the ones that produce the leaders who occupy the political space, whether in the Executive, Parliament, or the Senate.

So the culture of adhering to constitutional principles must begin at the political party level. When leaders rise from these parties and eventually become presidents, senators, MPs, or governors, they should carry forward that culture. They should continue upholding national values and practising good governance because that is the framework they grew within as members of the political party that nurtured their leadership journey.

Of course, we face external pressures that may be beyond our control, but if strong governance principles are embedded early within parties, they can significantly influence leadership behaviour and, ultimately, support broader socioeconomic development in the country. But there are things that we can manage within our own framework of economies to be able to, you know, maybe stand better chances of having, you know, a forward-looking country. Yes.

HOST:

Allow me to ask this question. You know, after the repeal of section 2A and now all of us are enjoying this space we are in today.

REGISTRAR:

Yes.

HOST:

Don't you think that we are misusing this space? Ninety-one political parties, and you've got 27 more with provisional registration status. I think in the next five or so years, we'll be clocking 200 parties.

REGISTRAR:

If you look at it in terms of numbers, it may sound like we have too many parties. But if you look at it in terms of access to a space where you can express yourself, then I do not think that any number is too many. We are looking at provisions.

For example, if you have an ideology that doesn't fit with the existing 91 political parties, what do you do? You are then not provided for.

So what we're saying is: as long as you're able to get a niche and say, *this is what I want to stand for*, then that space should exist. And that's what I keep telling the parties: you need to define yourself.

What do you want to stand for?

What is the space you want to fill, one that you believe the 91 parties have not filled?

HOST:

And what is the response you get from them?

REGISTRAR:

Oh yes, the response is there. This is why every political party now is required to submit to us a

statement of ideology as part of the registration process. They do a presentation of that ideology and we listen to it.

Of course, we have the constitutional framework that guides what it should contain and what it should not contain, especially ideologies that are harmful.

This requirement is new. It wasn't part of the earlier registrations before around 2017–2021. But now they must present it.

It's a commitment: *this is what we stand for.*

Can they hold onto that and run with it consistently? That's part of what we are trying to build, so that we can stabilize political parties and move them from personal interests to issue-focused and ideology-focused political parties, for the sake of stability and a progressive democracy.

HOST:

Again, you've talked about the procedures they must follow. But you as an office, what do you think political parties are responsible for, or even you, in terms of policymaking? Because we need to advance as a nation.

REGISTRAR:

The reason political parties exist is, first, to seek power, form government, and influence policies. That's a core purpose of political parties.

As a regulator, what we are trying to do is create an environment that allows the public to identify the kind of leaders they want, leaders who will shape policy, shape the economy, and shape national values.

The only place that such leadership can be found is within political parties.

Yes, we now have independent candidates, people who don't belong to any party. And we have the Constitution, which holds all of us accountable, whether you are an individual candidate or

a party.

But for our office, our primary responsibility is the political parties sector. We want to give parties an environment where they can build leadership that will influence this country in a direction that benefits the citizens of Kenya, not the party itself.

HOST:

How is your office and the National Assembly working hand in hand to enhance democracy in the country?

REGISTRAR:

Of course, the National Assembly is a key legislative organ. We are governed by an Act of Parliament, the Political Parties Act, which came into effect in 2011. We cannot operationalize that on our own.

So, every time we need to make recommendations on what should form part of the governing framework for political parties, these recommendations must go to Parliament. They have to review them and translate them into law for us to use effectively.

So, there is a very strong relationship between our office and the National Assembly, because that is where all our reform proposals go, especially those requiring legal amendments.

HOST:

Great. You know, Wanjiku is enlightened now, and understands the importance of public participation. How are you handling that? How are you onboarding Wanjiku in political party formation, running of parties, and understanding their data and ideologies?

REGISTRAR:

Yes, and I think I mentioned this earlier. Part of our focus and dream is to devolve to all 47

counties. That is our first priority, so that we are accessible as an office, and people can easily come for information.

Secondly, we are engaging different groups: the youth, women, and special interest groups, both at the county level and internationally where opportunities exist. We also leverage partnerships with organizations because, as I said, we do not have the capacity to do everything alone.

We are also exploring avenues with the media, like yourselves, to onboard information and educate the public. We want people to know the requirements of forming a political party without needing to read the Constitution.

People should know:

- What is required to form a party
- The organs of a political party
- How these organs function
- How a party is supposed to conduct itself
- The need for frequent elections

We want to undo the myth that political parties are individuals. Parties are public bodies and must be accountable to the public.

So part of our work is exposing as much information as possible through every platform available. Because you cannot make an informed choice without information.

Democracy is not just about fairness, it is about knowing how to choose. And our role is to ensure the public has the right information to make those choices.

HOST:

You are the new sheriff in town. What keeps you awake at night when you think about political parties and our country? What really keeps you awake?

REGISTRAR:

What keeps me awake at night...

Of course, the political space in Kenya is very tricky, and we struggle with many issues. But the biggest thing I think about is: How do we continue moving forward without undoing the gains we have made?

That is our biggest challenge. And I truly pray that we become more forward-looking.

HOST:

You sound so hopeful.

REGISTRAR:

Yes, I am hopeful because I believe this country has the ability. Our political parties have had ups and downs, yes, but looking at where we've come from, I am hopeful we can make this country better.

The political parties we have can become stronger, because the intention is there.

And the coming in of the young generation is something I really look forward to, how we can onboard them and let them move democracy within political parties and within the country forward.

HOST:

I mean, we are headed into a heated season. But as you said earlier, politics starts from day one. How ready are you, together with the political parties, to weed out fraudulent parties and ensure Kenyans are presented with bona fide parties for the election?

REGISTRAR:

Yes, of course, that becomes a very busy time for us, just as it is for the electoral body.

HOST:

Yeah.

REGISTRAR:

What happens during this period is that parties begin gearing up for elections. So we have a lot of engagements with them on compliance, because that is a requirement for every political party.

HOST:

Which is a very big challenge.

REGISTRAR:

A very big challenge indeed. But as I mentioned earlier, once you begin the process of becoming a registered political party, you realize it is not as easy as people think.

That is why I do not agree when people say we have “briefcase political parties.” If there is a briefcase party, it is *not* a registered political party, because you cannot go through the registration process and still be a briefcase entity. It is simply not possible.

So part of what we are doing is holding regular compliance clinics. In fact, we had one last week. All the 91 registered political parties attended.

And these are not theoretical sessions, they are real clinics. We sit down with each political party individually and go through everything step by step:

“You are 90% compliant here, 40% here, 50% here,” and so on.

We give timelines, maybe 30 days, to comply and give feedback, and we supervise the process.

We don't just say it; we literally go to their offices in the 47 counties to verify that the required information is available.

This will intensify as we get closer to 2027, because we need them fully compliant as elections approach.

Part of our engagement also involves onboarding the parties early enough to reduce the tension that builds up during election periods. We can already see tension from by-elections. Managing that will require collaboration with IEBC and other stakeholders. We need to actively

engage the political party leaderships, *the real leaderships*, so they can accommodate each other and help preserve the peace of this country.

HOST:

Wow. I think we just have to wrap it up there. One hour gone just like that.

John Cox, Lorionokou, Registrar of Political Parties. Thank you.

We've talked about - beyond party lines and beyond political parties.

Thank you so much

REGISTRAR:

Thank you.

-The End-

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