A leadership non-governmental organisation seeks to secure one million signatures to petition Parliament to change the Constitution to allow for a rotational presidency.

The Institute for Democracy & Leadership in Africa (IDEA), in collaboration with Bunge la Wananchi and other civil society organisations, has started a three-month exercise it says will cover all the country's 47 counties.

Article 257 of the Constitution provides for a popular initiative to the amendment of the Constitution signed by at least one million registered voters to be presented to the yet-to-be-constituted Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission for onward transmission to the County Assemblies, which upon approval shall present it to Parliament.

IDEA says a research it conducted recently reveals that many Kenyans prefer a rotational presidency, which will provide sanity and political stability in the country.

Many Kenyans also feel that from the 2007-8 post election violence, Kenyans need a system of governance which provides opportunities for all Kenyans to participate equally without being discriminated upon or being manipulated and classified as majority or minority, IDEA said.

Such a system shall promote equity, real power sharing and unity among the people. It will also create effective governance and management of public resources as per Article 43 of the Kenyan Constitution. A rotational presidential system will also be democratic as it will eliminate tribal alliances whereby a few tribes gang up to form an alliance to deny other minority tribes the opportunity to gain the presidency.

"Kenyas has a population of nearly forty million people and comprises of nearly 45 communities, including Kenyans of the Asian and European origin. The presidency should not be a preserve of a few communities at the expense of the minority in the name of democracy. Even the Mijikenda, Dorobo, Ogiek, Teso and Kenyan-Asians have a right to serve the country's top position," IDEA said.

Even though Kenyans ushered in the new Constitution recently during the referendum with jubilation and excitement, the Constitution should be amended to create room for a rotational presidential system, whether regionally or ethnically, to avoid fights, displacement, destruction of properties and unnecessary loss of lives during election times as witnessed in 1997 and 2007-8, IDEA added.

"During the Bomas of Kenya constitution-making conference of 2002-3, Kenyans preferred a non-Executive presidency. Their desire was thwarted by the same politicians now crusading for change and reforms in the country and yet only serving and fighting for their own selfish interests and ambitions," IDEA said.

"The Constitution needs to be amended urgently and a new system put in place to create a good enabling environment for a peaceful and democratic transition during the coming General elections in 2012."

IDEA is a pan-African organisation championing democracy, leadership and peace coexistence among communities in Kenya and in Africa.

According to Jayan Patel of IDEA, even though the majority rules in democracy, democracy itself must be controlled, guided and continued to allow equal participation to all. Because of tribal diversity, democracy in Africa cannot be the same like in Europe, America or Japan.

"The rotational presidency system has worked very well in Tanzania at party level because Mwalimu Julius Nyerere entrenched nationalism and unity among the people of Tanzania and not tribalism as a party manifesto. Tanzania's ruling party Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) ensures a national representation system that reflects a chain of command in terms of how the party nominates candidates to represent the party as presidential candidates. Because of that, Tanzania has been having smooth and respectable presidential transitions," Patel said.

In Nigeria, the presidency is rotational regionally in the sense that both the South and the North are represented effectively in the government as president and vice president respectively. In Sudan, the late Dr. John Garang Mabior of SPLA/SPLM preferred a rotational presidency as opposed to secession for the purpose of good governance and unity of the people of Sudan. In Burundi, where there are major tribes, a similar practice has been adopted whereby the presidential system exchanges between Tutsis and Hutus respectively, Patel says.

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