

Citizens' Continental Conference on the African Union Summit

Addis Ababa, 23-24 January 2008

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Organizer: Center for Citizens' Participation in the African Union (CCP-AU)

A people-centred African Union: CSO engagement in a peaceful and prosperous industrialising Africa

Civil Society Communiqué

We, the undersigned organisations welcome the opportunity of the 10th Ordinary Summit as a chance to come together again as a joint civil society to contribute to an increasingly united Africa. This conference builds on the value of the last such civil society gathering, which took place in Accra, Ghana in June 2007 around the 9th Ordinary Summit.

The transformation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU) in 2001 was a landmark event for a continent whose peoples are increasingly demanding greater ownership over their present and future. The AU's strategic plan for 2004-2007 set out five priority programmes, the second of which focused on the responsibility to 'actively involve African citizens at large and members of the Diaspora in the process of building continental integration.' With a commitment from the AU to enhanced engagement of African civilians in the process of uniting the African continent, there remains the actualization of a new form of partnership. We believe that civil society can serve as the critical link between the African peoples and AU.

CSO participation in AU audits

The interim continental and national Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCCs) are the only representative official mechanisms through which CSOs can participate in the AU with consultative power. Nevertheless, these councils have weak legitimacy and lack visibility and policy influence. Considering the criticality of CSO engagement in a people-driven AU, and the nascence of the AU itself, the audit process and CSO involvement in it is of utmost importance. Furthermore, on a continent where the process of industrialization is heavily influenced by external entities with either disinterest in or lack of connectivity with the realities of sustainable economic development from a localized perspective, the involvement of civil society in decisions taken by the AU is vital for the realisation of a truly people-centred AU.

It is therefore recommended that:

- 1. The AU should conduct a comprehensive, holistic internal audit of the AU Commission in anticipation of the conclusion of each five-year AU Commission term. Furthermore, it should actively engage civil society in such an audit.**
- 2. There should be a permanent monitoring element as part of the AU Commission, the reports of which would be submitted to the parliament.**
- 3. The AU should take action on the recommendations of the first audit.**

Recognising the criticality of CSO involvement in actualising the requisite change, we the undersigned commit to the following:

- 1. In recognition of the communication gap between the AU's existing CSO-focused bodies, the Citizen's Directorate (CIDO) and the ECOSOCC, we will establish a CSO-managed coordinating body as a link between the AU and African CSOs. Such a body will be based in Addis Ababa and will be a means through which the AU could funnel its communications with the CSO community as well as an entity through which CSOs could channel their voices to the AU.**
- 2. We will conduct a people's audit of the AU in anticipation of the conclusion of each five-year AU Commission term. It will be funded primarily by the African peoples through member states and private entities.**

CSO participation in a union government

In principle, the AU has clearly committed to the idea that 'the Union Government must be a union of the African people and not merely a Union of States and Governments'. Accordingly, popular participation was considered a key value in the process. African CSOs are in a crucial position to monitor the realization of this value. This role is particularly vital in a people-centred industrializing Africa where the impacts of rapid economic development potentially undermine the active participation of African citizens.

It is therefore recommended that:

- 1. The AU should recognise its responsibility to assist in its own popularisation.**
- 2. The AU should be responsible for policy development and implementation relating to:**
 - a. Peace and human security, including:**
 - i. the promotion and protection of human rights**
 - ii. free movement of African peoples across national and state borders**
 - b. Sustainable continental economic growth**
 - c. Fair and sustainable global trade**

- d. Effective, efficient and economically responsible communication and infrastructure
 - e. Good governance
 - f. Quality education
 - g. Sustainable environmental protection
 - h. Responsible public health
 - i. Collective foreign policy and continental representation
3. **The AU Commission needs to demonstrate its commitment to its own constitutive act by enabling at national, regional and continental levels increased CSO engagement in the AU functions via an accessible ECOSOCC**
 4. **Furthermore, the AU needs to demonstrate its commitment to open lines of communication with the African citizens by creating reporting mechanisms relating to the work of CIDO and ECOSOCC.**

Recognising the criticality of CSO involvement in actualising the requisite change, we the undersigned commit to the following:

1. **We will challenge our own governments and the African Parliament and expect them to represent their peoples effectively within the Union.**
2. **We will be the example of the power of cooperation and collaborative effort in terms of coordination, transparency and effective representation of the voice of the African people.**
3. **We will unify our voices across national and state boundaries on issues of shared importance.**
4. **We will actively engage the AU in our commitment to a union government via invitations to our public forums and inclusion in our communiqué distributions.**
5. **We will encourage educational institutions at all levels, including universities, to develop training programmes on the AU and its activities with the idea that it will promote youth interest and develop a cadre of well versed professionals active in continental affairs.**
6. **We will establish communicative forums through which the African civilian voice can be shared in relation to union government issues and as a means of enforcing transparency and accountability of the AU.**
7. **We will promote the approach of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights of being inclusive of CSOs within the union government.**

CSO contributions to peace and human security on the continent

The AU is mandated with promoting peace and human security on the African continent. So too is it mandated with involving African civil society in such an endeavour. The process of establishing such a partnership rests with both entities and the promise of an effective partnership is significant. In a continent where short and medium-term socio-political and socio-economic development is in a constant state of transition, civil society must remain an active stakeholder throughout. African CSOs are the best positioned to promote the voice of African civilians and manage the influence of outside actors. While the international community has the responsibility to protect African civilians, we must push it to be accountable and should voice our demands for a global community that prioritises the peace and human security of the African peoples.

It is therefore recommended that:

1. **The AU must be more proactive in actualising its commitment to the principle of non-indifference and thus the responsibility to protect and use its right to intervene in states as a means of re-establishing peace and human security.**
2. **The AU must seek justice in the case of the post-election crisis and violence in Kenya by:**
 - a. **Recognising that an unconstitutional change of government has taken place and activating the necessary consequences under Article 30 of the Constitutive Act of the AU;**
 - b. **Sending an immediate mission to assess the gross human rights violations;**
 - c. **Holding an extraordinary meeting of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR);**
 - d. **Suggesting to member states the option of sanctions against those found to be responsible for the crisis and violence in Kenya;**
 - e. **Promoting protection of human rights workers and the media personnel;**
 - f. **Granting an immediate audience around the AU Summit with the Peace and Security Council to persons willing to make presentations including CSOs from Kenya; and**
 - g. **Promoting a resolution based on a peace, truth and justice.**
3. **With regard to the situation in Darfur, the AU must:**
 - a. **Recommit itself to taking effective action on the Darfur issue and treating it as a regional issue;**
 - b. **Urge the Government of Sudan and Sudanese rebels to agree to an immediate cessation of hostilities and to abide by International Humanitarian Law;**

- c. **Ensure that UNAMID is immediately and fully deployed and equipped in order to provide real protection and a secure environment for the millions of people who live in fear;**
 - d. **Sign a cooperative agreement with the ICC; and**
 - e. **Urge the Government of Sudan to stop hindering compliance with ICC arrest warrants and with the deployment of UNAMID and other efforts to establish peace and human security.**
- 4. We encourage member states to disallow the Government of Sudan the AU presidency until such a time when there is a peaceful resolution of the Darfur conflict.**
- 5. With regard to the situation in Zimbabwe, the AU must:**
 - a. **Implement the ACHPR resolution of 28 November 2007 encouraging Zimbabwe to hold free and fair elections;**
 - b. **Dispatch an elections observation team to Zimbabwe to monitor 2008 elections;**
 - c. **Closely monitor the human rights situation in Zimbabwe and urge the government of Zimbabwe to uphold human rights standards set out in the African Charter on Human and People's Rights; and**
 - d. **Exercise oversight on SADC's mediation efforts in Zimbabwe.**
- 6. The AU should focus on the conflict in Somalia with greater dedication by:**
 - a. **encouraging member states to contribute troops for peacekeeping;**
 - b. **strategically re-wording the AMISOM with a strong protection mandate to recognize the continuation of violence and the distinct roles of humanitarian and military actors;**
- 7. We urge the international community to take action to contribute to the cessation of violence in Somalia.**
- 8. The AU should promote a sustainable and people-centred approach in its development of the RECs and NEPAD.**

Recognising the criticality of CSO involvement in actualising the requisite change, we the undersigned commit to the following:

- 1. We will concentrate our voices when it comes to supporting actions and principles that promote and protect human rights. An example of such a concentrated voice is the Darfur Consortium.**

2. We will lobby our parliament members to provide resources to support UNAMID and to prevent Sudan from taking the AU presidency.
3. We will further develop and promote our own definitions of human and people's rights.

CSO engagement with Economic Partnership Agreements

African CSOs, in partnership with their counterparts from the Caribbean, Pacific and European regions, have been engaged with the European Commission to protect the interests of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries from potential damage inflicted by Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). In September 2007, over 200 organizations in almost 40 countries staged protests against the EPAs to dissuade the European Union (EU) from: a) imposing trade liberalization and other 'trade-related' terms upon the ACP countries; and b) refraining from putting pressure on ACP countries to sign EPAs within the year. They also passed important recommendations upon which the EU-ACP trade relations should be founded. It was communicated that the trade relations should be based on an approach that: a) supports sustainable development in ACP countries and the realization of economic, social, environmental, cultural, civil and human rights; b) is based on a principle of non-reciprocity and special and differential treatment (SDT) for least and lesser developed countries; c) recognizes ACP producers' rights to trade protection within their own domestic and regional markets, as they and their governments judge necessary; and endorses and respects the right of ACP countries to the necessary policy space to formulate and pursue their own development strategies.

It is therefore recommended that:

1. The AU promote alternatives to EPAs, such as everything but arms (EBA) agreements or GSP Plus as alternatives to EPAs.

Recognising the criticality of CSO involvement in actualising the requisite change, we the undersigned commit to the following:

1. We will support efforts to promote alternatives to EPAs, such as EBAs or GSP Plus.
2. We will encourage our ministers of trade to challenge EPAs.
3. We will promote rights-based trade and economic development. We commit our organisations to communicate with our national delegations and machineries in our capitals, as well as to the citizens and peoples in Africa and the Diaspora through the mass media.

We look forward to communicating with our colleagues in North Africa, and especially those in Egypt, where the next CSO continental conference will be held in advance of the 11th Ordinary Summit.

The responsibility for growth on this continent lies not only with the AU and its member states, but also with the people of Africa. We commit ourselves to re-doubling our efforts to represent the voices of our African brothers and sisters.

Signed:

Action Aid, Ethiopia

Action for Self Reliance Organisation, Ethiopia

Addis Ababa Mulu Wongel Believers Church Relief and Development Program, Ethiopia

Advocates International, South Africa

Association for Environmental Development in Ethiopia, Ethiopia

Africa Human Rights Court Coalition, South Africa

African Centre for Humanitarian Action, Ethiopia

African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies, The Gambia

African Initiatives for a Democratic World, Ethiopia

African Rally for Peace and Development, Ethiopia

Afroflag Youth Vision, Ethiopia

Almaz Ashine Children and Family Support Association, Ethiopia

Association for Nation Wide Action for Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect, Ethiopia

AU Monitor

Basic Education Association, Ethiopia

Berhane Hiwot Children's Village and Family Service Organization, Ethiopia

Beza Organizing Association of Women in Need, Ethiopia

Centre for Human Rights, Democracy & Transitional Justice Studies, DRC

Christian Lawyers' Fellowship, Ethiopia

Community and Environmental Development Action, Ethiopia

Christian Relief and Development Association, Ethiopia

EHRCEPA, Ethiopia

Ethiopia Human Rights Council, Ethiopia

Ethiopian Teachers Association, Ethiopia

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FAHAMU

Forum on Street Children, Ethiopia

Free-Zim Youth, UK

Friederich Ebert Stiftung, Ethiopia

Institute for Democratic Governance, Ghana

Institute for Security Studies, Ethiopia

International Federation for Human Rights

International Refugee Rights Initiative, Uganda

Kenyans for Peace with Truth and Justice, Kenya

Organisation of Social Justice in Ethiopia, Ethiopia

PanAfrica Movement

Poverty Action Network of Ethiopian CSOs, Ethiopia

Peace Journey in Africa Two Thousand Promotion, Ethiopia

Pride Ethiopia, Ethiopia

Save Darfur Coalition, USA

Talent Youth Association, Ethiopia

The Menkir Volunteers' Society, Ethiopia

Tridimensional View, Ethiopia

TrustAfrica, Senegal

Vision Ethiopian Congress for Democracy, Ethiopia

Youth Network for Sustainable Development, Ethiopia

Youth Action for Development Association, Ethiopia

Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, UK

Adopted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 24 January 2008