

African Civil Society Forum 2007

22-24 March, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Democratizing Governance at Regional and Global Levels to Achieve the MDGs

FINAL STATEMENT

1. We, more than 250 participants of the African Civil Society Forum (AfCSF) 2007, representing over 150 NGO/CSOs from 32 countries of the 5 African Regions and 4 from other regions of the world, gathered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 22-24 March 2007, to participate in the African Civil Society Forum 2007 on the theme «Democratizing Governance at Regional and Global Level to Achieve the MDGs». The Forum was convened by the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO) together with the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) and in cooperation with the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Union (AU).

2. In convening the Forum, CONGO and FEMNET, were implementing their mandate to increase the participation of NGOs and other civil society organizations whose contributions they believe are essential to a truly global community. One of the objectives of the Forum was to establish an independent space to give African civil society a larger voice at both regional and global levels.

3. The AfCSF 2007, envisioned as a multidimensional, multi-sectorial, multi-faceted event, was organized to develop a practical framework for African civil society to formulating and advancing their advocacy strategies at national, regional and global levels.

4. We all come from countries with different cultures and religions, different levels of social and economic development. Some of us suffer from internal conflicts and external threats, while others enjoy peace and stability. Some of our countries are classified by the United Nations as "least developed countries", while others are more economically advanced. Yet, despite all differences between us, through the AfCSF 2007 we had the opportunity to share our common concerns and aspirations, and how we can forge partnerships and build solidarity across regions, to promote the goals of peace, human rights, justice, equitable and sustainable development.

MDGs

5. We reaffirmed the commitment to achieve the Millennium Development Goals based on the largest gathering of Heads of State at the Millennium Summit. Participants spoke of MDGs +, examining implementation of MDGs from a rights-based approach, which needed to include gender equality and employment (decent work) issues.

6. The Forum in Africa comes at a critical time. Acknowledging that at the current trend the MDGs will not be met, the Forum urged participants to a much deeper engagement and more meaningful partnerships with their Governments and international institutions at regional and global levels.

Democratizing Governance

7. Acknowledging the values and importance of open, transparent and people-owned democratic processes, the Forum participants stressed the relevance of good governance, the participation of civil society and protection of human rights as key and prerequisite for sustained progress in the achievement of the MDGs.

8. The overarching theme of global governance was addressed through three thematic lenses: *Peace and Security; Governance and Human Rights; and Development, Trade and Finance issues.*

UN Reform

9. Having considered the report of the SG «*In larger freedom*» which gives equal weight and value to peace, development and human rights issues, we acknowledged the strong recognition of the role of civil society in the reform process. We also appreciated the new impetus and support for civil society engagement coming from the UNECA. However, we are also aware that there are efforts by some Member States to arbitrarily curtail the voice of civil society and this should be vehemently opposed.

Gender

10. In recognizing that the gender perspective and gender equality have not fully been mainstreamed into prior civil society gatherings, we commit ourselves to work towards the development of a coherent policy of gender mainstreaming, that is inter-generational into all advocacy policies and strategies.

Youth

11. We affirm the challenges coming from youth, agents of social and political transformation, and strongly encourage and support their participation at all levels. The future of Africa is linked to the involvement of young people and to their dynamics into the development process.

Children

12. The Forum encouraged and supported the inclusion of children issues and participation. Children are the future and if their issues and participation are not deliberately included the world will be worse and more chaotic than today. *"We have yet to move from the hand-writing assertions that war is terrible for children to the unequivocal assertion that war is completely unacceptable for children, and that whenever there is a conflict there has to be the most dramatic series of emergency interventions to prevent what is happening to children. The general hand-wringing about the tragedy of war-which never seems to see child vulnerability as one of the most egregious casualties – has to come to an end in the international community"* - Stephen Lewis, UN special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa

People with Disabilities (PWD)

13. We recognized that people with disabilities need special recognition, and we strongly affirmed their participation and contributions at every level. We urged all multistakeholders to include the disability groups in all advocacy initiatives and provide basic provisions for the protection and promotion of fundamental human rights and freedoms for PWDs.

Strengthening CS and self-assessment

14. We recognized the need to put our own house in order in relation to legitimacy, accountability, and transparency, both at the collective as well as the individual level, in order to fully realize civil society's role of critical and constructive engagement in processes furthering peace, development and human rights issues.

Recommendations

General Guidelines for Action

15. After three days of rich and lively discussions, the participants looked at the findings of Forum proceedings and developed a framework for the following recommendations¹:

16. Peace and Human Security for Achieving the MDGs

Recalling

Article 20 of the Protocol establishing the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU): "The Peace and Security Council shall encourage non-governmental organisations, community-based and civil society organisations, particularly women's organisations, to actively participate in the efforts aimed at promoting peace, security and stability in Africa. When necessary, such organisations may be invited to address the Peace and Security Council"

the following recommendations were issued:

A. To the African Union

- i. The AU PSC should implement the provisions of the Protocol, in particular the mainstreaming role of the CSOs in policy processes of the PSC;
- ii. Improve the working method of the PSC to fully realize in a transparent way CSOs participation in all efforts aimed at promoting peace, security and stability in Africa;
- iii. Be guarantors of Peace Agreements, in particular in creating monitoring mechanisms with the participation of relevant national and regional NGOs/CSOs;
- iv. Involve children, according to their capacities, in decisions relating to peace negotiation which allows them to address their issues that threaten their security and peace;
- v. Develop specific orientation programs for children in conflict areas and involve them and their issues in Peace Missions;
- vi. Address the crisis in security forces regarding orphans and vulnerable children;
- vii. Abolish school fees, registration fees in all states to enable orphans to enroll and receive personal care and self worth;
 - **Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army Rebels**
- viii. Be part of the monitoring team in order to build the confidence of the rebels (LRA, Uganda) and also to monitor the secession of hostilities agreement; and
- ix. Involve African women in the on-going peace negotiations between the government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army Rebels (LRA).

B. To Civil Society

- i. Expand the participation in monitoring and evaluation from shadow reporting to full roles in drafting, editing and issuing the main report from the beginning;
- ii. Take more ownership and responsibility for realizing the role of civil society as partners;
- iii. Involve the Private Sector in peace-building processes by taking active measures of inviting them to all preparatory/information gathering meetings;
- iv. Promote peace education through tapes and videos that people can watch and learn; create platforms to exchange best practices;
- v. Empower CSOs and NGOs operating at the grassroots level;
- vi. Encourage people, in particular human rights organizations, addressing the Darfur disaster to pay the same attention to other conflict areas in Africa (e.g. Somalia, Zimbabwe);
- vii. Consider the situation of vulnerable groups, in particular PWDs and the Internally Displaced Persons along with the refugees;
- viii. Link the MDGs to the PRSPs² (no consensus on this proposal, see below);

¹ The rich content of our discussions and the details of our plans for the future are contained in reports from plenary session, w-shops and round tables which will be annexed to a more comprehensive report.

- ix. Insert AIDS prevention as an integral part of all humanitarian programs;
- x. Provide psycho-social interventions to children who are deeply traumatized and emotionally scarred; and
- xi. Establish a response mechanism for the orphaned child to the consequences of AIDS, in addition to the need to urgently respond to the children of war.

C. To the United Nations

- i. Lobby the Security Council to address the vulnerable circumstances of children perpetuated by the use of small arms and light weapons to create an embargo on small arms and light weapons.

17. Governance and human rights based approach to the development agenda

A. To the African Governments

- i. Assume full responsibility for the protection of human rights and for the protection of its own people, rather than only its government, according to the “**responsibility to protect**”, adopted by all heads of State at the 2005 Summit;
- ii. Introduce human rights education into all schools curricula at earliest age;
- iii. Articulate national policies within an appropriate framework to address “internally displaced persons” which has become a major issue on human rights and good governance;
- iv. Adopt a rights based approach to MDGs in integrating human rights into all actions for development and into all enterprise development set up for the realization of the MDGs;
- v. Create multidisciplinary research teams to articulate and understand MDG concepts in national languages so they become part of public goods and promote good governance and transparency;
- vi. Establish specific MDGs strategies to enhance the realization of MDGs in post conflict countries;
- vii. Create focal office on MDGs and provide it with a trust fund for the MDGs to help post conflict countries and regions to aid the process of monitoring and advising the CSOs and government on the activities related to the eight-goals strategy; [AU, UN and (even CONGO)]; and
- viii. Encourage and improve public-private partnerships (between state and non-state actors) to promote a democratic culture and bring it deep into the awareness and understanding of African people.

B. To Civil Society

- i. Empower CSOs at grassroots and facilitate their building-up capacities, expertise and skills in intervening and preventing human rights abuses;
- ii. Promote education for civic responsibilities in accessible languages;
- iii. Encourage stronger engagement by civil society in the participation and promotion of APRM;
- iv. Urge governments to join the APRM process;
- v. Participate in elaboration of APRM national reports and promote stronger youth involvement in APRM process;
- vi. Create and promote income generation activities designed to allow discriminated and marginalized groups to find markets for their products; and
- vii. Engage in quality training and capacity building on market tendencies to enable people to exporting end products and not only commodities

C. To the United Nations

- i. Encourage all UN Agencies working within the framework of humanitarian aid to Africa to promote civil society driven and owned projects, giving priority to local communities to provide and distribute food supplies, in order to support local production and by respecting the food customs of vulnerable populations; and
- ii. Develop specific MDGs strategies to enhance the realization of MDGs in post conflict countries.

² Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers

18. Development, trade, finance, debt relief and investment

A. To the African Governments

- i. Integrate MDGs into national policies and programs, including into PRSPs (no consensus, see below);
- ii. Strengthen and prioritize economic growth aimed at increasing well being and reduce inequality
- iii. Link economic issues to the political debate;
- iv. Democratize governance in order for civil society to access decision-making processes; and
- v. Provide fair trade agreements for African countries to export their products.

B. To Civil Society

- i. Review critically the role of different external actors into our political policies;
- ii. Promote partnerships between civil society and the private sector;
- iii. Develop and promote knowledge and expertise within civil society communities on commercial, finance and debt issues;
- iv. Dissociate MDGs from the PRSPs (no consensus, see above); and
- v. Prepare and train for stronger involvement in WTO decision-making processes.

C. To the international community and financial institutions

- i. Revise and adjust foreign investment to better meet the continent's needs;
- ii. Alleviate development aid methods with smoother conditions and more focused on development; and
- iii. Create direct credit lines for African women's development.

19. Gender Perspectives in the MDGs

The Millennium Declaration promotes gender equality and women empowerment as a basic human right. The Declaration also maintains that giving women their fair share is the only way to effectively combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable. Women indeed play a critical role in Africa's economic growth and development as showcased by their active participation in households and communities. Many challenges related to the gender issues must be faced. In the area of education³, almost two thirds of the world's illiterate are women. In the labour market, disparities exist between women and men in terms of opportunity, income and treatment. The majority of women are engaged in atypical unregulated work in agriculture, homes, export processing zones and the rapidly and ever growing informal economy. Deliberate steps must be taken to achieve equality between men and women within all areas of life.

A. To the African Union and African Governments

- i. Promote men and women equal involvement in the policy making;
- ii. Encourage and promote women contribution in the elaboration of national program and budget through stronger engagement of NGOs promoting gender equality;
- iii. Promote the informal sector and recognize and encourage the women entrepreneurship;
- iv. Promote national policies of fair and just salaries for both women and men;
- v. Implement effective legislation and programs to deal with sexual harassment at the workplace;
- vi. Promote recourse ways to protect women rights;
- vii. Sensitize women on MDGs meaning and role, especially the MDG 3 on promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women;
- viii. Promote educational and training programs to fight gender stereotypes;
- ix. Criticize some negative values and models of the African societies;
- x. AU should encourage African States to ratify some regional instruments as Maputo Protocol, the one related to the African Court of Justice and the ILO Convention;

³ UNESCO estimates 2000-2004

- xi. Ratify, implement and monitor the implementation of regional and international standards on gender equity; and
- xii. Establishment by the AU of monitoring and follow-up mechanisms on the implementation of States commitments.

B. To Civil Society

- i. Integrate the gender issue in all programs for the achievement of the MDGs within every step, including internal management and governance;
- ii. Better involve men in sensitization actions on gender issues and women rights in the communities;
- iii. Sensitize on men and women equality in the dialogue between citizens and governments; and
- iv. Establishment of monitoring and follow-up mechanisms to ensure the adequate implementation of States commitments.

C. To the United Nations

- i. Establishment by the UN of monitoring and follow-up mechanisms on the implementation of States commitments; and
- ii. Respect commitments taken within international agreements and conventions related to gender issues, in allocating required resources for their effective application.

D. To all UN Member States

- iii. ILO Member States and those of the UN should ratify the key ILO Gender Conventions 100 (Equal Remuneration), 111 (Discrimination on Employment and Occupation), 156 (Workers with Family Responsibilities), 183 (Maternity Protection) and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, UN 1979).

20. ICT for Development

Recalling

The *UN General Assembly Resolution 56/183, 21 December 2001* which highlighted "the urgent need to harness the potential of knowledge and technology for promoting the goals of the United Nations (UN) Millennium Declaration and to find effective and innovative ways to put this potential at the service of development for all"

and recognizing

- a. That ICTs have the potential to help poor communities to meet key development priorities, especially in the areas of poverty, health and education, and to play a catalytic role in accelerating economic growth;
- b. The importance of a holistic and multi-sectorial framework and partnership approach that can more effectively harness the role of development (ICT-D) both as an enabler of development as well as an enhancer of capacity development at the individual, community, organizational, systemic and societal levels;
- c. That civil society has a great potential in human resources;
- d. That Civil society, by its nature, tends to be closer than most government actors, to the grassroots, and the pulse of their societies; that private sector does not act in limited-resource settings; and that CSOs often having constituencies that they can mobilize at levels that government may find difficult to reach; and
- e. That the knowledge economy is a reality and therefore governments, international organizations and all stakeholders should work together to establish effective enabling environment for the implementation and sustaining of the African Knowledge Economy, at the systemic and societal levels;

the following recommendations were issued:

A. To African Governments

- i. Consider universal access to ICTs (connectivity, capacity, content and control) as a fundamental right by the international community and Governments;
- ii. Consider civil society groups as key partners by development partners and governments;
- iii. Set-up mechanisms to support civil society; and
- iv. Take into account the international development agendas particularly those focused on Africa, such as the World Summit on Information Plan of Action, the Tunis Agenda, the African regional Plan of Action in the Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE), the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and similar initiatives.

B. To all

- i. Promote partnership between all stakeholders including, Civil Society, Government, Private sector, media, international organizations, development partners and Academia in effective ICT Policy formulation, implementation and monitoring to the achievement of the MDG, particularly those related to poverty reduction, education, health, environment and gender equity.

C. To Civil Society

- i. Promote North-South-South-cooperation to ensure better visibility of best practices and experiences of emerging countries, ensure balance in North-South partnerships, and facilitate South-South exchanges;
- ii. Considering the natural and human resources of Africa, work with governments to better use available resources in order to improve development outcomes; and
- iii. Promote partnerships with the private sector in order to find appropriate solutions according to the specific needs of local populations.

21. HIV / AIDS

It is generally agreed that in the absence of a curative HIV/AIDS vaccine, about 24 million Africans who are living with HIV/AIDS will probably die within the next few years. Currently, there are 30 vaccine candidates in the pipeline for trials in Africa but there is no guarantee that any of these vaccines will deliver protection either at pre-exposure, point of transmission or post-infection stages. Therefore, for Africa's millions who are living with HIV/AIDS, treatment with anti-retrovirals (ARVs) is the only viable option, especially since they have been proved to reduce HIV/AIDS mortality by as much as 80 percent. But despite the sharp reduction in price, especially of generics, (98 per cent since 1996), ARVs are still beyond the reach of millions who need treatment, although remarkable progress has been made in expanding access. In Africa, one in six people who needed treatment received ARVs by December 2005. Of about 10 million people, mostly Africans, who will need ARV treatment by 2010, less than 5 million will actually receive the treatment.

A. To African Governments

- i. Secure health financing with a continuation strategy;
- ii. Minimize HIV/AIDS-related stigma by integrating voluntary testing and counseling (VCT) into the regular health services;
- iii. Lobby for continuation of nutritious food supply for the PLWHA;
- iv. Operationalize the various commitments to fighting HIV/AIDS made by African leaders at various forums. Often this has not been done because of the clash of national priorities on a platform of scarce resources;
- v. Use APRM for HIV treatment advocacy; and
- vi. Show concrete political will.

B. To Civil Society

- i. Intensify advocacy by stakeholders of NGOs and CSOs who are best suited to hold leaders to account. But they will be successful only to the extent that they effectively use information. CSOs should also forge crucial broad partnerships beyond their traditional allies in pursuit of a new regional agenda to offer free HIV/AIDS services to everyone who needs them, regardless of the ability to pay;
- ii. Monitor when a country is up for the APRM and push authorities and reviewers to give serious and thorough consideration to the issue of HIV/AIDS;
- iii. Prepare advocacy materials to either validate or question official position on HIV/AIDS;
- iv. Involve children as key informers re HIV/AIDS on peace and human security;
- v. Include children issues in peace mission's mandate and training; and
- vi. Include HIV/AIDS and prevention in all humanitarian programs and advocacy as core to reversing the negative impact