



**Third Citizens' Continental Conference on the 11th African Union Summit
Pyramisa Hotel
Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt: 22, 23 June 2008**

Civil Society Communiqué ahead of the 11th Ordinary African Union Summit on "Meeting the Millennium Development Goals on Water and Sanitation"

On the third gathering of continent-wide civil society ahead of Ordinary African Union Summits, the continent is faced with pressing development and security related issues, as well as challenges to the roadmap towards the Union Government and implementation of the recommendations of the AU Audit. We, as civil society and peoples' representatives from across the continent and Diaspora, welcome this opportunity to collectively reflect on the state of the continent, the issues facing it, and developments since the last Summit to arrive at a common position from which to communicate concrete recommendations to Heads of State and Government, Permanent Representatives, and Foreign Ministers convening at the 11th Ordinary African Union Summit. It is our sincere hope that such forums and spaces, which are indicative of our contribution and commitment to a people-driven African Union, enhance wider civil society contribution and input into deliberations and decision making at the AU level.

On Progress towards MDGs

Concerned that just past the midpoint to the target date of 2015, Africa as a whole is not on track to meet the MDGs; specifically in relation to MDG 7- Ensuring Environmental Sustainability-only 11 countries are likely to meet the water requirements in the rural areas and 7 likely to meet the urban sanitation requirement;

Recognizing the national and regional disparities in progress towards MDGs;

Noting the basic right to water and the strong linkage between adequate access to water and sanitation and levels of public health;

Mindful that the MDGs cannot be achieved without the utilization of social protection schemes and programs for vulnerable groups such as women, children, pastoralists, and the disabled;

Cognizant that failure to properly manage resources and address climate change will lead to conflict and greater food insecurity;

Acknowledging that empowerment of women is central to the attainment of the MDGs;

Recommends:

1. Greater coherence and harmonization of development frameworks, namely MDGs and NEPAD, and efforts towards them at the national and regional level;
2. Building Member States' and the AU Commission's statistical capacity to effectively monitor development results and design appropriate policies and interventions;
3. Meeting African Union member states' budgetary commitments such as the 15% budget commitment to health;
4. That member states formulate regional initiatives and actions to better manage trans-boundary resources such as water;
5. Member states plan for, and protect against, future shocks such as due to climate change, with a focus on implications for MDG-related expenditures;
6. Member states and the African Union ensure adequate financing for MDGs by pushing for a 'polluter pays' principle;
7. African Union takes measures to strengthen international mechanisms for the return of stolen wealth and the removal of harmful tax and secrecy practices of tax havens; AU further sets up a continent-wide framework for the regulation of FDI flows and special investment mechanisms and that the funds redeemed are invested into development programs and meeting the MDGs;
8. Member States as a matter of priority ratify and implement the Protocol on African Women, and initiate and implement policies that enhance women's access to water and active participation in decision making processes on water and sanitation.

On the Food Crisis

Noting the new threats to food security, in particular rapidly rising food prices and the impact of climate change on the livelihoods of the poor and other vulnerable groups;

Mindful of the underlying long-term under-investment in agriculture by Member States;

Recognizing the setbacks to development gains the food crisis will bring about and more immediately the challenge to the stability and security of countries;

Keenly aware that women constitute the overwhelming majority of food producers, yet control less than 5 percent of land and represent 60 percent of those suffering from hunger;

Recommends:

1. Member States to put in place short-term measures to mitigate the impact of the present global food crisis;
2. Member States to give appropriate budgetary priority to agriculture, specifically by honouring their commitment to the Maputo Declaration of allocating at least 10% of their national budgets to agricultural and rural development;
3. Member States initiate the necessary legislative and policy reforms to enhance women's access to land ownership, finances, and agricultural inputs and technology;
4. African Union builds and facilitates the implementation of a coordinated African agriculture and food security policy and response.

On the Current State of the Economic Partnership Agreements

Noting that certain ACP states were pressured and ended up signing interim agreements in smaller trading blocs or individually rather than the originally envisaged groups;

Mindful of the obstacles that the EPAs present to regional integration;

Concerned that the EPAs are not compatible with the development needs of member states;

Deeply concerned by the EU's use of the EU-AU strategy to implement aspects of the EPAs;

Recommends that:

1. Member States that have initialled the EPAs conduct a thorough impact assessment of the EPA deal;
2. Member States immediately move to revise or remove clauses from the initialled EPAs detrimental to their special development needs and interests;
3. Member States advocate for alternatives to the EPAs, specifically GSP plus.

On the post-Audit Roadmap

Concerned that the AU Audit process was not adequately inclusive of CSOs and women;

Noting the AU Commission's reservations on certain recommendations of the AU Audit;

Mindful that the recommendations set out in the Audit report have far reaching implications for civil society and the peoples of Africa;

Recognizing that the Audit was a technical and not political appraisal of issues relevant to African integration;

Cognizant of the importance of the Audit recommendations trickling down to the REC level;

Recommends:

- 1.Immediate prioritization of and action on the Audit's recommendations, ensuring adequate financing and allocation of responsibility for implementation of the same;
- 2.Greater attention and concrete actions to implement the accelerators identified as central to speeding up integration;
- 3.Wide circulation and popularization of the Audit by the AU Commission, enabling civil society and African peoples to support the changes necessary and hold the AU accountable;
- 4.Limiting AU Ordinary Summits annually to allow more time for implementation of decisions;
- 5.Greater engagement of Member States with civil society and quickened establishment of a National Commission for African Affairs in every member state;

On Zimbabwe

Concerned about the rampant and escalating politically motivated and organized post March 29 election violence;

Noting the massive disenfranchisement of the general population by displacement and intimidation;

Concerned about the selective or non-existent response of officials to the violence and the impunity of those who are perpetrating it;

Recognizing that the minimum conditions for free and fair elections are absent in period preceding the run-off June 27 elections;

Acknowledging that the SADC led mediation has failed to alleviate or bring an end to the current situation;

Deeply disturbed that despite four million Zimbabweans requiring humanitarian assistance, the government has ordered the suspension of the work of civil society organizations;

Recommends that:

- 1.African Union publicly condemns and calls for an end to the violations and abuses taking place in Zimbabwe and a restoration of basic political and civil rights;
2. The Zimbabwean government invites the Special Rapporteur of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on the rights of human rights defenders and women to investigate allegations of human rights violations and abuses;
- 3.African Union calls for an independent and impartial investigation into grave human rights abuses;
- 4.Zimbabwean government reinstates immediately the work of civil society, and the African Union and Member States call for the donor community to commit necessary funds for humanitarian aid;
- 5.African Union brokers a multi-stakeholder dialogue to create a political process, including reforming state institutions, to create conditions in which internationally observed elections can be held as soon as possible.

On Darfur

Concerned about the deterioration of the security situation in Darfur with 150,000 newly displaced, ongoing hijackings and banditry, and 9 Sudanese aid workers killed since the last summit;

Noting the continued non-cooperation and failure of Sudan to arrest and handover the two ICC indictees;

Concerned about the hundreds of men, women, and children arrested in Khartoum since the May 10 rebel attack on the capital seemingly on the basis of their ethnic profile;

Acknowledging that ending the crisis in Darfur requires protection of civilians, accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity, and a peace agreement that addresses underlying political problems;

Deeply concerned about the continued obstruction to UNAMID deployment, offensive military flights, and contravention of the arms embargo by the Sudanese government;

Recommends that:

1. African Union calls an immediate high level meeting with the UN (with the Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council) and Sudan, setting out a roadmap and timeframe for peace talks with both parties and the adoption of a credible and functioning ceasefire agreement by all parties; this meeting should also be used to allocate the missing resources for UNAMID;
2. African Union immediately and publicly calls on Sudan to end all arbitrary arrests and detentions; promptly release all detainees for whom there is no legal basis for detention, or charge them with an offense; inform the detainees' families of their whereabouts; and immediately end all use of torture and other mistreatment of detainees;
3. African Union issues a resolution demanding Sudan to cooperate in bringing justice to Darfur by arresting and handing over government official Ahmed Harun and militia leader Ali Kushayb to the ICC;
4. African Union supports the appointment of a single, empowered mediator for Darfur, who will also deal equally with the Sudan-Chad proxy war and liaise with those responsible for oversight of CPA implementation;
5. Alongside the United Nations, the African Union expedites the deployment and better resourcing of the UNAMID force, and demand the Sudanese government's facilitation and cooperation in the deployment process;
6. Sudan immediately ratifies and implements the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa, to which it is a signatory;
7. African Union demands that the government of Sudan and rebel leaders to protect the ability of humanitarian actors to operate.

On Somalia

Noting that the fighting between Ethiopian-backed TSG forces and insurgents has forced up to one million Somalis to flee their homes and killed an estimated 6,500 civilians since 2007;

Deeply concerned that 2.6 million Somalis require humanitarian assistance, a 40% increase since the last summit;

Welcoming the June 9 peace agreement between the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia and the opposition Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia;

Aware that the presence of AMISOM and their corresponding mandate has not brought about improved security for Somali civilians;

Recommends that:

- 1.All parties to the conflict allow for full and secure humanitarian access and civil society operation;
- 2.African Union condemns the abuses of international humanitarian and human rights law by all parties to the conflict and urge full and complete investigations into and prosecutions for civilian deaths and other violations;
- 3.African Union maintains support of the AMISOM mission until a time when it can handover to a UN peacekeeping force, which has been called for by the recent peace agreement;
- 4.Member States, regional bodies, and the African Union maintain support and necessary diplomatic pressure for the implementation of the recent peace agreement.
- 5.African Union urges Member States to immediately commit and deliver peacekeeping troops who would relieve Ethiopian troops.

On the African Court of Justice and Human Rights

Noting that effective and accessible judicial institutions of the African Union are essential for the protection and promotion of the full range of rights guaranteed by the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and its Protocols:

Recommends that:

- 1.Member States ensure that the final Protocol on the African Court of Justice and Human Rights (the Merger Protocol) guarantees direct access for individuals and civil society;
- 2.Member States as a matter of priority ratify the Protocol establishing the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, and make the Declarations enabling direct access for individuals and civil society.
- 3.African governments support and protect human rights defenders in accordance with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1998.

On International Justice

Recognizing that international justice mechanisms are important means for fighting impunity and human rights violations;

Recommends that:

1. African Union urges states that have not done so to sign and ratify the Rome Statute;
2. African Union signs the outstanding cooperation agreement with the International Criminal Court;
3. African Union urges Member States to ensure necessary financial and technical assistance to special investigations and courts; in particular the Senegalese court tasked with carrying out the Hissen Habre case.

Adopted Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, June 23rd, 2008

Signed,

ACORD International; ActionAid Africa; Action for Conflict Transformation; Advocates Africa; Africa Humanitarian Action; Africa Public Health Alliance; African Business Roundtable, African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies; African Youth Association; Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Organization; Afroflag Youth Vision; Akina Mama wa Afrika; Algerian Coordination for Families of the Missing; Amnesty International, Arab Organization for Human Rights; Arab Program for Human Rights Activists, Arab Coalition for Darfur; CAFOB; Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies; CEOSS, Coalition for the International Criminal Court; Civil Monitor for Human Rights; Coalition for an Effective African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights; Commission Nationale Justice et Paix; EASSI; East Africa Law Society; ECCAS; Egyptian Business Women's Association;; Egyptian Center for Women's Rights; Egyptian Red Crescent; El Nadim Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture; Equality Now; Fahamu; FAMEDEV; Federation of Women's Lawyers; FEMNET; Friends of African International; FWID; GCAP Senegal; Human Rights Association for Assisting Prisoners; Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression; International Federation for Human Rights; International Refugee Rights Initiatives; Khartoum Centre for Human Rights and Environmental Development; Land Centre for Human Rights; Organization for Human Rights; Ligue Tunisienne pour la Defense des Droits de l'Homme; OISEA; OMDH; OSISA; Peace and Development Platform; PELUM, Malawi; PELUM, Zambia; Plate-Forme Nationale des Organizations de la Societe Civile de Madagascar; Reseau des Jeunes pour la Democratie et la Politique; Save Darfur Coalition; SOAWR Coalition; TrustAfrica; United Nations Millennium Campaign; WANEP; Women of Liberia Peace Network; Zimbabwe Solidarity Forum.