



COMMUNIQUE

Consultative Dialogue Between African civil society organisations and the Pan African Parliament

1. The Pan African Parliament (PAP) in collaboration with the Southern Africa Trust held the first Consultative Dialogue with African civil society organisations under the theme **“Building Effective Mechanisms for Civil Society Engagement with Pan African and Regional Institutions”** on 7-8 May, 2007 at the Gallagher Estate, Midrand, South Africa. Among other things, the Consultative Dialogue sought to sensitise civil society organisations to the work of the Pan African Parliament especially appraising them of the Rules of Procedure and work of the Parliamentary Committees as well as exchange views and information on current issues pertinent to the development of Africa.
2. Coinciding with the 7th ordinary session of the Pan African Parliament being held from 7-18 May, 2007 under the theme **The African Union Government**, the Consultative Dialogue provided an opportunity for civil society organisations to reflect on the proposal on the Union Government in preparation for the African Union Summit in June 2007 in Accra, Ghana.
3. Officially opening the historic Consultative Dialogue, Hon. Dr Getrude Mongella, President of PAP called on civil society organisations to actively participate in the proceedings and plenary sessions of parliamentary committees and engage on African development issues. Dr Mongella emphasised that it is not the role of civil society organisations and parliaments to govern but oversee those who govern to ensure that policies are pro-people. On the African Union Government, she invited civil society organisations to sensitise their constituents and present their views on the issue before the next African Union Summit in June as it was imperative for them to inform the strategic areas of focus for a Union Government. To promote relations between the PAP and citizens of Africa, Dr Mongella noted that PAP will establish a civil society dialogue unit.
4. One of the four Deputy Presiding Officers of Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) of the African Union (AU), Mr Charles Mutasa, also addressed the official opening ceremony. In his address, Mr Mutasa noted that momentum has been built around the establishment of national chapters to operationalise the ECOSOCC and CSOs need to take advantage of this space. He however noted that the ECOSOCC work is being hampered by lack of adequate resources.
5. In attendance were civil society representatives from Africa including research institutions, trade union networks, faith-based organisations and community based organisations.

6. On engagement with the PAP, the PAP representative challenged the CSOs present on their limited engagement with PAP despite their willingness to do so. It was resolved that CSOs need to take advantage of the opportunities that the PAP provides for CSO engagement such as the parliamentary committees, and other organs of the parliament – the Bureau and the Permanent Committees. More importantly, there is need to institutionalise the engagement between PAP and CSOs to ensure that there is continuity, constant collaboration and sustained engagement.
7. In this regard, it was noted that an independent mechanism to support interfacing between CSOs and Pan African institutions is essential. Thus it was recommended that a facility be created to support sustained engagement between civil society organisations and these institutions. However, this facility should be linked to other initiatives such as ECOSOCC and a similar CSO support facility in Addis Ababa.
8. Regarding the proposal for an African Union Government, which has emanated from a culmination of proposals coordinated by the Committee of 7 championed by Libya, Uganda and Nigeria among others since 2005, and which is the agenda item for the July 2007 AU Summit, CSOs concluded that while the long-term vision is desirable it is currently excessively focused on institutional reforms rather than mapping out the implications for strengthened African citizenship and needs more popularisation and consultation with citizens. It was agreed that CSOs must take the lead on generating an informed public debate on this agenda. CSOs emphasised that any Summit decisions on the proposal should be informed by wider consultations and input.
9. Concerning the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) campaign in Africa, it was noted that there is need to improve efforts around localising the MDGs. It was also agreed that there is need to support an integrated and inclusive anti-poverty campaign to ensure that civil society organisations inputs are evidence based and can inform policy formulation and implementation.
10. Regarding the global debate on aid effectiveness, the Consultative Dialogue called on civil society organisations to be more proactive in ensuring that the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness is implemented more rapidly to contribute to poverty reduction, and also called on donors to continue to support efforts that enhance CSO capacities to influence policy processes including the forthcoming high-level meeting on aid effectiveness to be held in Ghana in September, 2008.
11. The meeting agreed to collectively ensure follow-up discussions are held to establish sustained CSO dialogue with the Pan African Parliament and other pan-African institutions based in Midrand, South Africa. The meeting also agreed to collaborate to support other initiatives for CSO engagement with pan-African institutions based in Addis Ababa and other parts of the continent.

12. Participants at the Consultative Dialogue thanked the PAP for organising the dialogue jointly with the Southern Africa Trust. They also expressed their gratitude to TrustAfrica, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and Actionaid for their financial support to this process.

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