

## **COMMUNIQUE OF THE SADC HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT SUMMIT CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM MEETING 14-16 AUGUST 2005**

SADC Civil Society Organisations held a Civil Society Forum Meeting from 14-16 August 2005, ahead of the SADC Heads of State and Government Summit in Gaborone, Botswana. The SADC Civil Society Forum adopted the following Communiqué at the conclusion of the meeting.

### **On Gender**

The SADC Civil Society Forum notes that despite the advances made in achieving gender equality in the region, women remain second class citizens in virtually every sphere: political, economic, social and legal and calls upon the SADC Heads of State and Government:

- ✚ to endorse the recommendation by the Council of Ministers to elevate the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development into a Protocol for Accelerating Gender Equality;
- ✚ to endorse the recommendation by Council of Ministers to raise the current target of 30% women in decision making to 50% by 2020;
- ✚ to encourage the traditional leadership and structures to address the issues of gender inequality and gender based violence which continue to make women and girls vulnerable;
- ✚ to repeal existing laws and abolish practices which encourage harmful practices to women and girls;
- ✚ to ensure that schools are made safe for girls and that appropriate measures are put in place to address the safety of girls and prevent the drop out of girls.

### **On Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS**

The SADC Civil Society Forum notes with grave concern that nearly two years after the SADC Heads of States adopted the Maseru Declaration on HIV/AIDS, new infections and deaths of mostly women and girls have continued, seemingly unabated; and calls upon the SADC Heads of State and Government:

- ✚ to make HIV/AIDS a priority issue for the region and address the pandemic with a sense of urgency, with increased financial and human resources;
- ✚ to fulfil their commitment to contributing to the HIV/AIDS Regional Fund in terms of the agreement in Maseru;
- ✚ to elevate the Maseru Declaration on HIV/AIDS into a Protocol;
- ✚ to address the issue of access to health Care by strengthening health delivery systems through re-equipping and rebuilding medical facilities and retaining medical and para-medical personnel in SADC;
- ✚ to prioritise access to treatment and provision of adequate nutrition;
- ✚ to make the 'right to choose' a reality for women and youth in SADC by removing obstacles which inhibit their control over their sexual and reproductive health;

- ✚ to develop policies and programmes that seek to address the sexual, reproductive, and other health needs for youth, woman in prisons, refugee camps, women with disabilities and migrant populations.

## **On Food Security**

The SADC Civil Society Forum notes with concern the critical food situation in the region and calls upon the SADC Heads of State and Government:

- to demonstrate commitment to and comply with SADC trade protocol of 1996, specifically by removing tariff and non-tariff barriers in the region, to achieve a free trade area which ought to have been done by 2004;
- to address the issues of mismanagement and poor governance specifically linked to the national strategic grain reserves;
- to increase access to food to reduce the emerging regional dependence on food assistance;
- to ensure that women have access to land and security of tenure;
- to enhance the functioning of the Land Desk at the SADC secretariat and to develop a policy framework on the management and utilization of factors of production and other natural resources.
- to encourage Member States to ensure that national strategies target vulnerable groups including orphans and vulnerable children, People living with HIV and AIDS, the elderly, pregnant and lactating mothers.

## **On Media and Access to Information**

The SADC Civil Society Forum notes with concern that freedom of expression and media freedom is restricted within the region, and calls upon the SADC Heads of State and Government:

- ✚ to promote and protect the exercise of the rights to freedom of expression and the media;
- ✚ to refrain from harassing, intimidating, arresting and arbitrarily deporting journalists;
- ✚ to commit themselves to formulating policies and legal frameworks for the promotion and realisation of right to access to information to ratify and comply with the SADC Protocol on Culture Information and Sport (2001).

## **On Elections**

The SADC Civil Society Forum notes that multiparty elections have now been carried out periodically within the SADC region, that the period between elections has been characterised by human rights abuses, political instability and the lack of citizen participation, constitutional order and rule of law; and call upon the SADC Heads of State and Government:

- ✚ to promote and protect human rights, constitutional order and rule of law in line with international, continental and regional conventions in between elections;
- ✚ to embark upon legal, parliamentary and electoral reforms for deepening democracy and good governance and ensuring equal participation by women;
- ✚ to build competent and independent electoral management bodies and conflict management institutions;
- ✚ to ensure broad and fair access to the media both during and in between elections;
- ✚ to ensure commitment and adherence of Member States to the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections and to elevate the principles into a Protocol.

## **On Governance**

The SADC Civil Society Forum notes with concern that some member states are not in full compliance with SADC and AU values, protocols, principles, declarations and instruments on human rights, good governance and democracy, with some yet to sign, ratify and/or domesticate these instruments and are acting in clear violation of them; and calls upon SADC Heads of State and Government:-

- ✚ to take urgent measures to ensure that all member states sign, ratify and domesticate all SADC, AU and International protocols, treaties and instruments that ensure observance of human rights, good governance and democracy;
- ✚ to take urgent measures for immediate compliance and ensure periodic review of the extent of compliance by all member states with principles of SADC and of International law in respect of human rights, democracy and good governance.

## **In particular on Zimbabwe**

The SADC Civil Society Forum calls upon the SADC Heads of State and Government to intervene and

1. urge the Government of Zimbabwe to accept the findings and recommendations of the UN Special Envoy to Zimbabwe on Operation *Murambatsvina* and to immediately commence scrupulous implementation of such recommendations including;
  - ✚ ensuring that all those who are currently homeless as a result of the mass forced evictions have immediate unimpeded and unconditional access to emergency relief;
  - ✚ securing effective remedy for all victims including access to justice, and appropriate reparations;
  - ✚ engaging in genuine dialogue with all stakeholders to overcome the multiple socio-economic and political crisis that currently bedevils Zimbabwe; and
2. Urge the Government of Zimbabwe to abandon its current moves through Constitutional Amendment No 17 to remove protection of the law and oust

the power and jurisdiction of the judiciary to adjudicate past, current and future cases of alleged breach of the Zimbabwe bill of rights, but instead commence an open, free and fair consultative constitutional review process leading to the enactment of a new constitution.

### **On Swaziland**

The SADC Civil Society Forum calls upon the SADC Heads of State and Government to intervene and

1. urgently review the new Constitution and ensure that it complies with the principles of democracy and good governance to which she has committed herself under the SADC, African Union and the United Nations instruments
2. urge the Kingdom of Swaziland to respect and comply with the principle of Separation of Powers which has been persistently compromised by the pervasive influence of the King's powers throughout the three arms of government;
3. urge the Kingdom of Swaziland to open up democratic space and allow the people of Swaziland to fully exercise their rights to freedom of association, expression, assembly and political participation.