

CSO AU-ECOSOC PROCESS BRIEFING

Introduction

In its Decision AHG Dec. 160 (XXXII) of July 2001 in Lusaka, the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government stressed the importance of involving African Non-governmental Organizations, socio-economic organizations, professional associations and civil society organizations in Africa's integration process, as well as in the formulation and implementation of programme of the Union. In that same Decision, the Assembly requested the Interim Chairperson of the AU, in consultation with a group of experts and CSO working Group Representatives submit a comprehensive report during its 2003 Maputo Summit on ECOSOCC with recommendations on:

1. Its structure, functioning, areas of competence and relationships to other organs of the Union;
2. The procedure and criteria for selecting the members of ECOSOCC, including their terms of office,
3. The relationship between ECOSOCC and African regional non-governmental organizations and professional groups;
4. The Rules of Procedure of ECOSOCC and the preparations of its work programme.

The Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union (ECOSOCC) established under Article 22 of the Constitutive Act of the Union is an advisory organ composed of different social and professional groups of Member states of the Union. The establishment of this important organ is to enable the African people and institutions, not only to contribute to the programmes and decisions of the AU, but also to assume ownership of these programmes and be responsible for their implementation.

BACKGROUND

Past AU/OAU approaches for cooperation with CSOs, included the criteria for observer status and outlined essential prerequisites. In cases where observer status was not possible, cooperation agreements or Memorandum of Understanding could still be concluded as internal mechanisms for cooperation in specific areas. It is important to note that there were serious some limitations inherent in the OAU framework as it did not allow for direct participation of CSO representatives at the meetings and had no reporting or follow-up systems.

With the birth of the AU in 2002, it has become important for CSOs not to be observers of the AU proceedings but be an integral part of the organization's decision and policymaking process. To this end a CSO Provisional Working Group was set up in June 2002 to work on the modalities, ethics and functions of CSOs within and with AU

organs. Most importantly CSO will now work as an integral part of the ECOSOCC. The CSO Provisional Working Group was given a two-year mandate to complete this task June 2002-June 2004. During this period it is supposed to hold at least one big CSO-AU meeting in which it presents its draft documents to its fellow CSO members for approval and adoption before submitting it to the AU for final approval.

SCOPE AND ORGANISATION

It has been widely acknowledged that the African Union has always worked closely and collaborated with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Africa, albeit in an ad hoc manner. With time, the AU realized the need to foster and widen the scope of this collaboration for recognition was given to the fact that the African CSOs, in view of the closeness to the grassroots and to the economic and social realities of the peoples of Africa, would have a major role to play in the realization of the objectives of the Union. One of such objectives is to involve the people of Africa in the management of decision and policy-making processes, Another factor taken into consideration is the role they would be expected to play in the implementation of the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA).

In 1997, the Secretary General of the Union recommended to the Council of Ministers and the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, a more effective collaboration between the Union and Civil Society Organizations in Africa. The outcome of the approval given to this proposal was the convening of the 1st OAU- Civil Society Conference which was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia between the 11th and 15th of June, 2001. The theme of the Conference was “*Building Partnership for Promoting Peace and Development in Africa*”. The main objective of that Conference, apart from improving and consolidating the collaboration between the OAU and CSOs in Africa, was ‘to assist in promoting a homegrown African Civil Society and enhance its contribution to the fulfillment of the Union’s mission.’

The 2nd AU-Civil Society Conference was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia between 11th and 14th June 2002. The theme of that Conference, which was a follow up to the first Conference, was “*Developing Partnership between the OAU and the African Civil Society Organizations*”. This Conference was convened to further strengthen the progress made at the 1st Conference and to, among other things, develop modalities and mechanisms of collaboration between the OAU and CSOs in Africa, and to assess actions undertaken so far to implement the framework drawn up at the 1st Conference. In line with this in July 2002 the AU-CSO Provisional working Group was elected to work with the AU in coming up with modalities and ethics of such a working relationship.

1. The first AU-Civil Society Provisional Working Group Meeting was held at the M-Plaza Hotel in Accra, Ghana, from October 23 to 25, 2002.
2. Participants comprised sixteen of the twenty regional representatives elected at the Second OAU-Civil Society Conference held in Addis Ababa in June 2002 and three sectoral representatives nominated by the OAU Secretariat.

3. The activity of the Working Group is expected to lead to even better outcomes. For instance, the OAU Charter makes no reference for the civil society while the AU Constitutive Act makes specific reference to civil society, especially in Article 22. Nascent organs of the AU such as the Court of Justice, African Parliament, Specialized Technical Committees, Specialized Agencies, etc are also organs that would be open to participation of CSOs.

II. OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSE OF AU-CIVIL SOCIETY PROVISIONAL WORKING GROUP

The mandate of the Working Group includes the following:

- a). To define the modalities of African civil society interface and participation in African Union institutions and structures
- b). To define the nature and characteristics of civil society representation
- c). To establish Ethics and Code of Conduct of African CSOs that will participate in African Union institutions and processes.

Provisional Civil Society Provisional Working Group Representatives

Central Africa:

- 1.0 Prof. Maurice Tadajeu, African Civil Society Organisation, Cameroon
- 2.0 Prof. Bahati Modeste, Societe Civil du Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo
- 3.0 Mme. Julienne Makaya, CARESCO, Congo Republic

West Africa:

- 4.0 Mr. Kofi Awity, Charities Foundation, Accra, Ghana
- 5.0 Mrs. Kanta Rekia, BE/Congfen, Niamey, Niger

Eastern Africa:

- 6.0 Mary Wandia, FEMNET, Nairobi, Kenya
- 7.0 Mr. Jenerali Olimwengu, Habari Corporation (Newspapers) Dar, Tanzania

Southern Africa:

- 8.0 Charles Mutasa, AFRODAD, Zimbabwe
- 9.0 Mrs. Betty Nguni, NGOCC, Lusaka, Zambia
- 10.0 Dr. John Kudjoe, African Institute of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

North Africa:

- 11.0 Dr. Amany Asfour, Business Women Association, Cairo, Egypt
- 12.0 Dr. Fatima Karadja, ANSEDI, Algerr, Algeria
- 13.0 Dr. Anouar Moalla, Association Tunisienne de Lutte contra MST et le SIDA, Tunisia

Sectoral Representatives:

- 14.0 Dr. Jakkie Cilliers, Institute for Security Studies, South Africa

15.0 Dr. Olimide Ajayi, Africa Leadership Forum, Nigeria

As a representative of Southern Africa, AFRODAD will coordinate documentation that will need further discussions in Maputo on the basis of various meetings that have already taken place between the AU and African civil society. The final documentation of the Maputo Meeting will be distributed to the wider African civil society as well as providing documents for further discussion in Maputo during CSO Meetings prior to the summit.

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