

Submission to the African Union Summit

Continental Civil Society Meeting on the AU and NEPAD

Organised by the Renaissance South Africa Outreach Programme

Durban, 1 - July 2002

Introduction

1. Representatives of African civil society organisations (CSOs), meeting in Durban, South Africa from 1 to 2 July 2002, met to discuss the role of CSOs with respect to the African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).
2. Participants welcomed the creation of the AU as a landmark in the process of shared aspirations for African unity, on the continent and in the diaspora. CSOs have raised many critical concerns about the NEPAD initiative around its proposed principles and strategies, legitimacy, process and outcomes.

However, CSOs remain hopeful that NEPAD, as an initiative, will be a manifestation of the African renaissance with common strategies for overcoming impoverishment, and achieving gender equity on the continent, as well as playing a major role in facilitating economic viability for Africa in the global economy.

3. Participants welcomed the growing engagement between the OAU/AU and CSOs, as manifest in the two OAU-CSO meetings held in Addis Ababa in June 2001 and June 2002, as well as the Symposium on the AU convened on 3 March 2002 in Addis Ababa, and fully endorsed their outcomes. Applauding the democratic principles underpinning the Constitutive Act of the AU, participants called upon the NEPAD Implementation Committee to engage with African CSOs on a similar basis of full consultation and participation.
4. Discussions were wide-ranging and passionate and were informed by a number of basic themes. Prominent among these was a recognition that democratisation and civil society were a reality that could not be ignored. The demands for greater participation of all vulnerable groups, that is women, the youth, and the disabled recurred throughout. The meeting recognised the threat of HIV and AIDS to Africa's prospects and acknowledged the fight against the pandemic as a priority for all as well as the causes of maternal mortality. Fight against these communicable diseases should be premised on the

eradication of poverty.

5. However, participants acknowledged that much more needed to be done to realise the objectives of the AU and the NEPAD programme. The meeting convened into five working groups to pursue these issues, namely the role of civil society on (1) governance and democracy and NEPAD; (2) peace and security; (3) AU Organs; (4) development and resource mobilisation; and (5) youth development. The meeting then agreed to the following recommendations.
6. The meeting had extensive briefing and discussion on the issue of human security. It took note of the centrality of human security in the overall effort being deployed at national, regional and continental level towards sustainable development, and resolved to recommend that development policies of African governments should be informed by this concept.

Recommendations

7. Cognisant of the proposed AU Gender Directorate for the effective mainstreaming of gender in the AU, a Commissioner with an exclusive mandate on gender issues needs to be designated, and provided with adequate financial, human and material resources. Recognising the fact that African states have ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), we therefore demand that all structures of NEPAD and the AU meet the Beijing Platform minimum of 30% women representatives on the way to full gender equality.
8. A Specialised Technical Committee on Gender (in accordance with Article 14 of the Constitutive Act of the AU) needs to be established within 3-6 months of the adoption of this report.
9. The Assembly of Heads of State should expedite the ratification of the Additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights Establishing the African Court of Human and People Rights and recognise its independence from the Court of Justice. All civil society organisations within the continent must lobby their governments to expedite this process. A Human Rights Committee needs to be set up under the Specialised Technical Committees Establishment and Composition.
10. The Assembly of Heads of State should expedite the establishment of the Court of Justice by appointing judges to the court and giving them autonomy with respect to setting rules and regulations for the Court.
11. It is necessary to strengthen the role and capacity of African women, in particular women economists in the engendering and management of fiscal and financial policy on the continent, and for institutions to maximise access to low income groups, especially women.

12. Financial institutions and other organs of the AU should be held accountable and monitored within a framework of good governance and corporate responsibility.
13. A people centred approach to regional integration, based on sub-regional schemes, would be the best framework to address the continent's development and should be regarded as the building blocks towards greater unity and integration within the AU.
14. A focus on accelerated rural development with a special focus on agriculture as the key developmental priority of NEPAD should guide an inward looking model of accumulation.
15. The economic policy framework should be facilitated by a strong and inclusive developmental state which engages various levels of society in producing a developmental plan and guides markets to focus on internal investment and resource mobilisation.
16. The AU is urged to facilitate free movement of people and goods across borders in particular to facilitate people-to-to people interaction and trade as a basis for inward-oriented development.
17. The AU should promote the use of existing networks of the continent's research institutions to strengthen its policy formulation capacity, and ensure that the Pan African Parliament has a strong policy research capacity.
18. The AU should promote and protect the use of indigenous knowledge systems in the continental agrarian practices within the framework of the Convention of Biological Diversity of Agenda 21 endorsed by the OAU and within Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) to ensure indigenous resources are used for Africa's development.
19. African leadership needs to recommit to and implement the Lusaka Agreement as well as encourage the formation of partnerships with civil society. The inclusion of civil society in government processes is important and should be strengthened and highlighted to society at large. In promoting peace and security, the building of partnerships between civil society and governments should be based on genuine respect for and recognition of local knowledge.
20. Traditional as well faith leaders should be encouraged to engage with the AU and participate in the deliberations of NEPAD.
21. Eminent members of civil society should form part of the panel of elders or the wise. This should include exemplary former heads of state and government and/or politicians, traditional leaders and elder community men and women that will advise the Peace and Security Council of the AU. There is provision for the PSC to call on civil society to make recommendations and in this regard, civil society must make recommendations and have input on early warning systems and other conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms.

22. The AU should place youth at the centre of development, including skills development programmes for youth. There is need for statutory youth councils at national levels, to be linked to regional youth structures aligned to regional economic blocks such as ECOWAS, SADC, COMESA and IGAD, as well as to a continental youth council that will interface with the AU.
23. CSOs should energetically monitor the commitments made by African Heads of State at Abuja in April 2001, including the target of 15% of budget to be spent on health, and the annual report on progress in combatting HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases to be presented to the AU Summit.
24. On the role of civil society on governance and democracy as well as in relation to NEPAD, it should engage with the AU in a variety of ways.
25. CSOs must take every opportunity to engage with NEPAD, both through AU institutions such as the ECOSOCC and through NEPAD mechanisms such as the APRM. Civil society demands representation in NEPAD decision-making processes and structures. In parallel, CSOs must set up their own monitoring system to monitor NEPAD, based on nerve centres in the five key countries that form the NEPAD Steering Committee plus Addis Ababa. These should be for advocacy, communication and dissemination of information. We demand that the AU's institutions for accountability and oversight, namely the PAP, ECOSOCC and the African Court of Justice be set up immediately and democratised as quickly and thoroughly as possible. All governments should be encouraged to move immediately to ratify the PAP protocol and deposit the instruments of ratification with the AU commission.
26. Civil society should develop a monitoring mechanism to evaluate the performance of NEPAD member countries independent of the APRM.
27. Organs of civil society should develop their own codes of conduct and monitoring mechanisms for their own performance.
28. CSOs on the continent are encouraged to interact with similar organisations throughout the world, in particular with African organisations in the diaspora and CSOs in the global South.
29. Africans at all levels need to know more about NEPAD, its constituent parts and other regional and sub-regional initiatives and institutions. NEPAD Secretariat should undertake a publicity campaign and consult as widely as possible with all stakeholders. All documents should be translated into as many African languages as possible and disseminated using different media. A special effort should be made to provide translation services in NEPAD, AU and CSO meetings.
30. We urge that the elective principle be applied in constituting ECOSOCC, rather than having representatives appointed by governments. We also recommend the setting up of a meeting between representatives of CSOs and the AU to determine the modalities of ECOSOCC's

establishment as well its protocol and other appropriate instruments.

Conclusion

31. Civil society resolved that continuing engagement with AU and NEPAD must be an ongoing priority. CSOs in all their varying manifestations should engage with states and continental initiatives and institutions, and vice versa.
32. African unity and development have long been a vision of African people. African civil society, therefore, resolves to be vigilant in ensuring that African leaders remain true to their commitments as enunciated in both the Constitutive Act of the AU and the principles of the NEPAD process.