

SYMPOSIUM ON THE AFRICAN UNION

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STATEMENT OF CONSENSUS

I. Preamble

1. Africa must unite. At the dawn of the 21st century, economic and political integration is imperative for Africa's future.
2. Africa's unity was a dream of the leaders of Africa's independence. The movements that struggled for freedom across Africa included intellectuals and civil society alongside those striving for the political kingdom. In this tradition, we emphasise the involvement of the widest range of citizens and civil society in the process of creating the African Union.
3. This Statement expresses the consensus of participants in the Symposium on the African Union, as expressed to the African Development Forum III, and to the Organisation of African Unity. It expresses the common position reached among a wide range of stakeholders including civil society and the private sector, concerning the challenges of forming the African Union.

II. The Vision for African Integration

4. The African Union is a political, economic and social project. It aims to create a democratic space across Africa, to promote economic development, and to reflect a common African identity. These elements cannot be separated. African Heads of State have committed themselves to the establishment of the African Union, which will be a culmination

of the aspirations of many Africans, which have been held in trust throughout the first decades of independence. A profound responsibility lies on the shoulders of Africa's leaders.

5. Africa's integration should be based upon a set of core values held in common, including constitutional rule in African states, peace, democracy and respect for human rights. Simultaneously, the African Union itself should be as democratic as possible, moving as rapidly as possible towards establishing a directly-elected Pan-African Parliament, in accordance with the treaty relating to the establishment of the African Economic Community and the Constitutive Act of Union.

6. Regional integration should move forward on multiple simultaneous tracks. It should proceed in a manner that is accountable and reflective, as well as determined and coordinated. In order to promote democracy and good governance, the process itself should involve democratic participation and stakeholder involvement.

III. Broadening Engagement

7. Africans at all levels need to know more about the African Union, its constituent parts, and other regional and subregional initiatives and institutions. The African Union, member states and other institutions should undertake a publicity campaign and should consult as widely as possible with all stakeholders. All relevant documents should be translated into as many African languages as possible and disseminated using different media.

8. At the June 2001 OAU-CSO meeting, agreement was reached on the importance of wider and more systematic CSO access to the OAU Summit and decision-making processes. Formalising the civil society linkages with the emergent AU structures is important. This includes clear guidelines on observer status, access to AU Summits and other meetings, and parallel civil society and NGO forums at AU meetings.

9. The linkages between all regional institutions and their CSO counterparts should be formalised and strengthened across all sectors. The Economic, Social and Cultural Council should be set up to engage with the widest range of stakeholders. The African Commission

on Human and Peoples' Rights should strengthen its associations with African and international human rights organisations so as to bring human rights into the mainstream of the African Union. The Conflict Management Centre should develop links with CSOs, which have important roles in early warning and various forms of peacebuilding.

10. Regional initiatives, especially NEPAD, warrant closer engagement with stakeholders. There is a need for more systematic and deeper CSO consultation with the NEPAD process, both as it prepares for presentation at the upcoming G-8 Summit in Kananaskis, Canada, and as it develops over the coming years.

11. The African Union needs to pay special attention to gender concerns including gender-balanced representation in the Union itself and in the process of consultation to establish the Union. The Pan African Parliament should meet the Beijing commitment of a minimum 30% representation of women and other African Union structures and institutions should endeavour to replicate this. An Advisory Committee on Gender operating at all levels will be a means of ensuring this. A Commission on Gender should also be established to monitor and enforce compliance with objectives of the regional and global platforms for action on women and gender issues.

12. The African Union should devote particular attention to youth. Young people should be involved in all levels of activities of the African Union. A special commission for youth should be created in pursuit of this, together with mechanisms to ensure the effective participation of young people in the decision-making of the AU.

13. We need to refocus upon Africa's educational challenges for the 21st century, which will be an era of knowledge-based economies. Continental investment in the fields of education, research and human capital development will be essential to reverse Africa's marginalisation in global higher education and research, to enable the continent to address its scientific and public policy challenges. Africa should identify and promote regional centres of excellence in order to reverse the brain drain, and should establish strategic partnerships with international partners to promote priority areas for research.

14. HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases must be addressed at a regional level. Countries must coordinate their efforts to overcome HIV/AIDS. In addition to its impact on human

health, HIV/AIDS has far-reaching consequences for the capacity of Africa's institutions, the resilience of its social fabric, and the governance of its societies. Following up from the ADF 2000, 'Leadership to Overcome HIV/AIDS', and the OAU Summit in Abuja in April 2001 on HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, Africa's specialist institutions should study the wider impacts of the HIV/AIDS pandemic with a view to informing policy at the national, regional and international levels.

15. Africa's debt crisis should be tackled with concerted action at a regional level and concerted engagement with Africa's creditors and international partners

16. Special measures are required for countries emerging from conflict. The transitions from war to peace and from relief to development require sensitive handling and a coordinated approach, combining both imaginative and generous economic initiatives with political support to the establishment of democratic reconciliation. In this regard, the African Union, Regional Economic Communities and Africa's specialist institutions should convene a special working group to advise African governments and international donors and financial institutions on a comprehensive strategy for responding to the needs of post-conflict countries.

17. Mechanisms for measuring and promoting compliance with treaty obligations will be an important component of regional economic integration, to help overcome past problems of disappointments. African civil society should help to set standards for institutions and governments to deliver on their commitments, and monitor their performance in reaching these standards.

18. International partnership must be broadened from government-to-government relations to include the full range of private sector, civil society, and regional and subregional organisations. If Africa is to develop, it must develop together.

IV. Economic Integration

19. There is a great need to distil experiences of integration in Africa and world-wide and share them in a systematic way. Lessons learned from Africa's experience at integration and other relevant experiences include the fact that the African Union is a politically-driven process. Therefore the involvement of the people must be assured. It was observed that there is a plethora of initiatives that could not take off because of a number of serious impediments, notably unwillingness to sacrifice sovereignty, a poor level of implementation of treaty commitments, lack of knowledge of integration initiatives at the national level, and the lack of commitment to getting everyone involved.

20. Further lessons include the fact that the challenges of regional economic integration should not be underestimated. Powerful factors stand in the way of integration and must be consciously dealt with. These include the similarity of economic structures and products between countries, the weak industrial base and dependence on raw material exports, the low level of intra-African trade, the integration of unequal partners, and macro-economic policies demanding stronger integration with the global markets and greater global competitiveness.

21. We need to be realistic in prioritising implementation and decide consciously in a focused manner on sequencing. We should not try to implement everything simultaneously. We need to build harmonised structures for trade and investment legislation and judicial processes.

22. We need to focus on countries geographically proximate to one another rather than selecting on the basis of the level of development. We need to recognise the linkages among the four areas of trade, sectoral development, infrastructure and human resource development. We need to integrate and adopt carefully the process of globalisation.

23. Implementing economic integration and the African Union is a demanding task. There is a need to determine the status and the role of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) with respect to the African Union. There should be annual meetings of RECs and the AU to ensure coherence, overcome overlap, rationalise structures, and harmonise policies and work programmes.

24. The private sector needs to be brought into the structures of decision-making of the African Union in a more meaningful manner. There is a need to give effect to the statutory provisions in the Constitutive Act of Union to give status to the private sector and civil society organisations as two major components of the economic integration process, and ensure their participation in the specialised technical commissions. The private sector and civil society organisations need to be proactive in finding regional mechanisms for co-ordinating their input into the African Union in accordance with the protocols.

25. The institutional capacity and the technical human resource competence of the African Union, including the current OAU Secretariat needs to be strengthened to ensure the effective implementation of the economic integration processes.

26. Common negotiating forums are essential. The relationship with Africa's trade and development partners is of critical importance and needs to be managed in a strategic manner. The capacity of the existing regional negotiation machinery needs to be strengthened to enable Africa to effectively participate in the global trading system and negotiate in multilateral fora to best advantage, particularly post-Doha and the ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement. There is a need to strengthen capacity for quick learning on the complexities of the issues involved, and long-term training of trade negotiators, and strengthening the African missions in Geneva.

27. NEPAD is a political reality and so is the African Union. We need to clarify the objectives and the strengths of NEPAD in support of the AU. We need to utilise NEPAD to achieve breakthroughs in critical areas of African economic integration such as infrastructural development, human resource development and HIV/AIDS. We should deepen our understanding of NEPAD and broaden the involvement of stakeholders. NEPAD should be discussed in a major participatory forum such as the ADF.

28. The African Union should incorporate the model of civil society participation applied by the CSSDCA process, whereby CSOs have their meetings within the CSSDCA, thereby bringing their views to the Heads of State and Government. In this regard, the main management units of the structure of the Commission which are currently under consideration should incorporate the involvement of civil society, which is not the case at

present. We should ensure that national legislation does not legislate against the provisions of regional economic integration and the AU in the name of national sovereignty.

29. We need to define what African citizenship stands for in terms of the protection, duties, rights and responsibilities under the law that are necessary to foster intra-African investment and cooperation.

30. Civil society organisations must have the willingness to listen to grassroots communities and voice their concerns, including such cross-border issues as child labour, sexual exploitation and the debt burden.

V. Peace, Security, Humanitarianism and Human Rights

31. Peace is fundamental to human existence. Human security is the foundation of all forms of security, including state security. In this regard, peace and security are the foundation for political integration, as well as the durable means for solving internal and international conflicts in Africa. Without peace, nothing else can be achieved.

32. The breakdown of peace and security in Africa is in part a result of the erosion African ethical values and philosophies. The quest for peace and security should therefore aim to rehabilitate and revitalise those values as well as the ways and means through which these values were transmitted from the old to the young. Insertion of these values in the education curricula as well as deep study of African history would go a long way towards deepening of commitments to African unity through the African Union.

33. In pursuit of peace and security, it is both desirable and necessary to seek harmonisation and coordination between the African Union and RECs. The African Union should seek means of clarifying the roles and responsibilities of these different African organisations, and should create a formal mechanism for cooperation between them.

34. The African Union should be active where it has comparative advantage, in setting standards and conflict preparedness and prevention, acting in partnership with the United Nations when there is a need for intervention, with a special African force set up in

accordance with the requisite provisions of the Constitutive Act. This demands a strong 'security council' at the African Union, coordinating with the security functions of CSSDCA and NEPAD, backed by the technical resources of an enhanced Conflict Management Centre, with an effective interface with the RECs.

35. The clarification of national and regional security doctrines is a precondition for effective security policies and an integral part of good governance. Governments should be encouraged to define their national security interests within the framework of the principles and goals of the African Union, and maintain armed forces consistent with these definitions. Special efforts should be made to restrict the illegal flow of small arms, to demobilise child soldiers, and to prevent the use of anti-personnel landmines in accordance with the Ottawa Convention.

36. The various human and people's rights instruments, adopted by the OAU and ratified by African states, should be incorporated in the Constitutive Act of Union, thus making them integral components of the African Union. There should be rationalisation, consolidation and strengthening of the implementation mechanisms of these instruments. In particular, ratification of the Protocol on the Establishment of the African Court for Human and People's Rights should be expedited. African states are urged to incorporate the fundamental human rights instruments into their domestic legal systems. An observer function within the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights should be instituted that could monitor and report on human rights violations while they are taking place, with a view to taking preventive action as well as seeking remedies after the fact.

37. The ECA and OAU should organise training of trainers to sensitise and educate African CSOs and institutions on all aspects of the African Union as well as the relevant protocols and conventions that governments have signed with respect to human rights.

38. The OAU Convention against Terrorism should be ratified and enforced by all African states.

VI. The African Union

39. African CSOs welcome the move towards the formation of the African Union, as an expression of the broad demand for unity by the African peoples. The success of the AU will depend on good governance, stakeholder participation, human rights and democratisation at all levels. There is a need to deepen democracy and promote participation. Adherence to constitutionalism is the core principle. Africa needs to further refine the principles of constitutionalism, strengthening the basic principle enunciated in Article 30 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, namely the suspension of governments that come to power through unconstitutional means from participation in the activities of the Union.

40. The sequencing of the setting up of the institutions of the African Union is a matter of importance requiring careful attention.

41. The African Parliament, as stipulated in Article 17 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, is a core institution for the African Union. This should be established as soon as possible and should as rapidly as possible be based upon direct elections.

42. Africa should move towards a common citizenship, through the initial steps of harmonising citizenship, naturalisation, immigration and employment laws, and through progressively removing restrictions on travel.

43. The African Court of Justice, as stipulated in Article 18 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, is a core institution for the promotion of economic integration and the core values contained in the Constitutive Act of Union.

44. The African Court on Human and People's Rights must be strengthened so as to serve as an effective guardian of human rights across the continent. People as well as governments should be represented in the court. It should be the supreme court of Africa, and its decisions should be justiciable.

45. Building upon the OAU-CSO meeting of June 2001, the African Union should establish the Economic, Social and Cultural Council as a consultation mechanism for liaison with

stakeholders. This forum should receive its mandate from African civil society organisations, the private sector, research institutes, relevant African organisations in the diaspora, in order to ensure the widest possible stakeholder participation. One of the functions of this mechanism is to focus activities of monitoring the African Union and other regional and subregional organisations and initiatives.

46. The African Union should investigate new mechanisms for financing to avoid complete dependence on the dues of Member States. A percentage of taxation revenue should be considered as a mechanism for financing.

VII. Regional Integration in Africa: The Way Forward

47. Integration in Africa demands leadership and vision. It requires Africa's leaders to plan for the long term, with a broad view of common interests. It demands the highest calibre of leadership, with integrity and vision.

48. Africa's integration must proceed at the level of economic integration and political unification. The two are inextricably linked. It must include common projects, the convergence of economic policies, common approaches to peace and security, and convergence on good governance and a constitutional order under the African Union. African integration also demands a united approach to dealing with the international community.

49. African integration will proceed on the basis of coordination between existing institutions at all levels. These existing regional and subregional organisations must work together, deepening their common values. The proliferation of regional economic communities must be scrutinised and where necessary they must be rationalised.

50. Progressive sharing of sovereignty is required so as to achieve the greater common good. Integration requires governments to forego some of their sovereign privileges, in both the political and economic spheres, in order to achieve a more prosperous, stable, democratic and powerful African collectivity.

51. The deepening of good governance at a regional level demands the democratisation of regional institutions, opening them up to greater participation by civil society. Regional integration must avoid the pitfalls of a 'democratic deficit', and the African Union, through the African Parliament, must be a force for democracy.