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Delivered at the 3<sup>rd</sup> AU-Civil Society Consultation on  
Implementation of the AU/EU Joint Strategy  
Bamako, Mali  
3-5 March 2008**

Representatives of African Civil Society Organizations,  
Representative of the European Union,  
Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

## **Introduction**

On behalf of the AU Commission, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the 3<sup>rd</sup> AU-Civil Society Consultation on the AU-EU Joint Strategy.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of this consultation are three fold. First, it is intended to underscore our sincere expression of commitment to the social compact underlining the foundation of the African Union (AU) to create a people-driven Union. To put it simply, we are here, in the words of St. Paul and Jimmy Carter, “to keep the faith”. It seems like only yesterday when we convened the 1<sup>st</sup> AU-CSO Meeting in Accra, Ghana, in March 2007, to collect inputs for the Joint Strategy. We promised then that we will travel consistently and together along the path.

We reconvened the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting when the negotiations were near the climax in October 2007 to discuss the direction of events and your expectations of the outcome document. That document has now been adopted in the Lisbon Summit of 8-9 December 2007 and we have to, as earlier promised, keep the faith and discuss it with you.

Second and related to this, we want you to review and assess the outcome document to see if it accords with your aspirations and to enable you define yourself within it. That definition, in turn, would determine the strategy of engagement.

Third and most significant, is the process of engagement itself. It is necessary to map out what can and should be done, as well as effective means of managing involvement in the process that would allow for spin-off and spill-over effects. In terms of spin-off, there is a premium on matching potential and capacity to allow for maximum impact. In this regard, it would be necessary to look critically at the priority areas of action, the variety of actors that would be part of the implementation mechanism, their individual and collective roles and the niche open to civil society. In terms of spill-over, it would be essential to look at how the AU-EU Strategy itself fits into the political and developmental process of African States and the African Union and how contribution within this specific framework can flow into and energize the wider platform by having a catalytic and multiplier effect.

### **Outcome Document**

In order to facilitate discussion and assist your deliberations, the Commission will provide a perspective on the outcome document. We shall explain how we see it, our perspective plan for continental engagement and key areas of interest, for your consideration.

During the recent 10<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Union held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, an Executive Council Decision on the outcome of the Lisbon Summit was adopted. The Decision called for implementation of the first Action Plan by all stakeholders. Following this, the Commission held its first meeting with the EU side to share views on the way forward regarding the implementation of the Joint Strategy.

## **AU Implementation Strategy**

The two meetings had significant results. First, it produced a calendar of activities that would assist the implementation plan. This includes proposals and agreement on a schedule for the meeting of the institutional Troika. In this regard, the AU began to evolve an implementation strategy that would involve all stakeholders. As part of this process, it was decided that an AU-CSO Conference should be held at this point in time to be followed by Consultative Meetings of all stakeholders from 19-20 March in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso and Maseru, Lesotho, from 14-15 April 2008, respectively. These meetings are expected to bring together all stakeholders to express their views on concrete actions to be undertaken to implement this partnership. Our colleagues from the Department of Economic Affairs will subsequently present the AU Implementation Strategy for your consideration.

It is important to note that the strategy is in gestation. It is evolving and therefore, you have a unique opportunity to examine and enrich it and ensure that it has a core civil society component. It will also be necessary for you to look closely at the roles defined for the various institutional actors, their divisions and complementarity and how they allow for mutual reinforcements.

It would also be important to establish what civil society can do within it and what they can do outside it to reinforce or monitor it and to add value to the people-centred orientation of the partnership. Clearly, there would be room for associative action as well as autonomous action. It would be necessary to demarcate the roles and boundaries and the processes of their interpretation.

Furthermore, it would be useful for the African Civil Society community present here to have an understanding of how the AU-EU Strategy defines civil society so that they can relate appropriately and effectively to other institutional actors when the consultative process takes place later in March and the middle of April 2008.

### **Civil Society, Outcome Document and Implementation Plans**

In our view, the outcome document agreed upon in Lisbon projects an alliance for co-development for prosperity that can be used for addressing issues of common concern and to strengthen and promote peace and security, democracy and governance, gender equality, sustainable development and effective multilateralism in the global arena. It identifies eight (8) priority areas for action to accelerate the process of achieving these objectives. These include: Peace and Security, in order to promote a safer world; Democratic Governance and Human Rights; Trade and Regional Integration; Millennium Development Goals; Energy; Climate Change; Migration, Mobility and Employment; Science, Information Society and Space.

Significantly also, it is conceived as a “partnership of equals” based on effective engagements of societies designed to achieve significant results in areas of fundamental commitments outlined in the priority axis for action.

As evidence of the desire to ensure effective engagement of societies in the two regions, the outcome document includes provision for effective participation of different institutional actors including civil society. It also prescribes definite role for civil society in both general and specific areas.

## Defined Areas for CSO Intervention

While awaiting your own perspective on expedition and outcomes, therefore, we would like to draw your attention to specific areas in which the document prescribes a role for CSOs and requires their explicit intervention. Second and related to these are areas where implicit CSO intervention is called. Third are areas defined for other institutional actors, such as states and regional institutions in which CSOs also have spaces that could be used effectively. It would be necessary to look seriously at the documents to identify all these roles. The design of the Commission is simply to highlight some significant areas in order to enable CSOs to draw out a more comprehensive appraisal.

The design for making the strategy work, with emphasis on institutional architecture and implementation, includes magnetic areas of attraction for CSOs. These areas are the following:

- A) As entry points for sustained influence, the Implementation Plan prescribes a need to establish a mapping of existing European and African civil society networks. In order to ensure that “your heads are not shaved in your absence”, this is an area requiring vigorous CSO involvement. How would this mapping be done and who would do it? Will it be within or across continents? What procedures will be put in place to update and guarantee the reliability of the data used in this regard. How would the mapping exercise reinforce or cross-triangulate with similar mapping exercises of existing regional institutions? For instance, the Audit Panel of the AU requested CIDO to do a mapping exercise of continental CSOs to support ECOSOCC and other AU engagement frameworks.

- B) The plan envisages establishment of a platform for European research institutes and think-tanks. I attended a meeting in Lisbon, Portugal, in which the rationale and procedure for doing this was discussed. It was a meeting of various research institutes and think-tanks. Who selects members of these platforms? What are the requirements and criteria? How would this platform of “eggheads” relate to and energize the wider civil society platform? What would be their specific niche in this context? Obviously, CSO in Africa must be part of this process of definition. In particular, there is a need to ensure that appropriate and wide array of institutions representing different shades of opinion are involved and that it effectively cuts across Europe and Africa, horizontally and vertically.
- C) Creation of a web portal to facilitate consultation with Civil Society Organizations ahead of key policy decisions. Who will take the initiative for this, Africa or Europe or both? If the latter, how would they cross triangulate. Moreover, portals apart, how would the product be used? What are the processes required for enabling such consultation ahead of key policy decision? What procedures would guarantee that such consultations have influence or impact?
- D) Moreover, as with mapping, what privacy guarantees would ensure that data collected accordingly would be employed only for the co-prosperity initiative of the AU-EU Joint Strategy?
- E) The Action Plan further envisages inviting representatives of European and African civil societies to express themselves ahead of Ministerial Troika meetings. What views will such representatives express? Is it their organizational or collective CSO views? If the former, what is the precise value, if not tokenism? If the latter, who selects such representatives and how?

What kind of consultations will be required to enable the presentation of collective or representative opinion?

### **Expanded Spaces for further CSO interaction**

Beyond these are expanded spaces for CSO interaction involving other important actors. These include the following amongst others:

- a) Mechanism for closer cooperation and dialogue between the Pan-African Parliament and the European Parliament, as well as between the AU Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) and local authorities. These institutions are poles of influence for CSOs. In addition, the AU ECOSOCC is a civil society organ.
- b) Establishment of informal Joint Expert Groups on all priority actions identified in the Action Plan (including Civil Society Organizations) with the necessary competence and commitment to work on the priority action plan concerned. The Groups will discuss the implementation and work on the priority action plan concerned. This is an important area of concern for CSOs. Who chooses the expert? Will CSOs be involved and how? What will be the proportion of CSO representation?
- c) Draw up an Annual Joint Report on the progress and implementation of the Action Plan to be presented to the Ministerial Troika. On page 23-24 of the Strategy Document, it is clear that progress reports are to be prepared by the AU Commission and the EU Council Secretariat in this regard. However, the document also states that in order to ensure a wide ownership of the process and transparency in the monitoring, Civil Society Organizations in the EU, Africa and

beyond are invited to prepare general and specific sector reports, the conclusions of which will be taken into account in the progress reports prepared by the two Commissions. How precisely can CSOs organize themselves to take advantage of this important opening? How can they relate effectively to the two Commissions in this context to assure maximum impact?

### **Constituency of Influence**

The second category draws attention to a third constituency of influence for CSOs. The strategy and implementation plan highlights certain areas of action for other institutional actors, such as Member States and regional organizations, particularly the Commission of the AU and EU. But these are organizations in which civil society has influence and impact and are often represented as important actors as in ECOSOCC. Clearly then, these are areas for independence and supportive action. This consultation would need to reflect on all this areas and a special session in the afternoon has been allocated simply for this purpose.

### **Approaches to Engagement**

It is also important for this consultation to reflect on engagement strategies. The Strategy and Implementation Plan place crucial emphasis on regional actors, including the Ministerial Troika and the two Commissions. That emphasis implies that CSO engagement strategy must coordinate with it and be effectively embodied within it. But there should also be room for autonomous CSO role especially in the monitoring and evaluation process. The outcome document highlights this in its provision for general and specific reports but it should go beyond this.

There is also a requirement for evaluating and monitoring the activities of key institutional actors to accelerate the pace of implementation and reinforce their efforts. This should also be part of the consideration of engagement strategy. There must also be emphasis on sectoral areas in the eight priority sections identified and how to organize intervention. Should we have sectoral CSO plans prepared by CSO networks, with a leader in each area that is widely acknowledged in the discipline? How would such efforts cross-fertilize and cross triangulate in wider follow-up and general consultation?

### **Follow-up Processes**

This consideration leads to follow-up processes. Organization is the key to effective influence and impact. This forum should discuss plans for this process.

### **Agenda and Work Programme**

We have designed an Agenda and Work Programme involving consideration of all these items. However, the Agenda and Programme are up for your consideration and you are at liberty to alter it. We have simply provided this as aid to your discussion. I should also point out that our purpose is to involve everyone that has been part of previous consultations to enable continuity and effective grasp. However, some have sent different representatives, while others have not been able to come because of other commitments. Hence, there should be a commitment to disseminate the content of our proceedings and consultations and to organize independent CSO consultation after this to follow-up on the process. Our expectation is that this meeting will raise the bar of awareness and allow for more informed consideration in that instance.

## **Conclusion**

Finally on behalf of the Commission and in particular, His Excellency, Prof. Alpha Oumar Konare, the outgoing Chairperson, I wish once again to welcome you to this consultation. As you are aware, the leadership of the Commission will change on 28 April 2008 and our expectation is that your deliberation will provide a good foundation for the follow-up activities of the incoming Chairperson, His Excellency, Mr. Jean Ping and his team. In that manner, your deliberations will have the institutional impact of sustaining the AU-EU process as well as institutional development of the African Union.

I thank you.