

DECLARATION OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY FOCUS GROUP

1. The Focus group meeting discussion centered around three clusters of issues which were:
 - Enabling environment at the national and regional levels for the functioning of CSOs.
 - Expanded and effective interface between CSOs, the AU and UNECA.
 - Issues to be raised during ADF III.
2. With reference to the above-identified clusters of issues, the focus group discussed the following specific issues:
 - The need to affirm the freedom of association as a component of good governance.
 - The need to further elaborate various issues related to the decisions of the OAU/Civil Society conference, including the clarification and operationalisation of the decisions.
 - How to advance the decisions of the ADF III pre-conference symposium.
 - The need for various CSOs to focus on specific interests such as the African debt burden.
3. The way forward
 - Call on States Members of OAU, AU and UNECA to make the exercise of freedom of association as one of the bench mark-indicators of good governance.
 - Affirm and recognize existing NGO networks interfacing at national, regional, and continental levels on various sectoral issues.
 - The CSOs assert their right to fully participate in the OAU/AU process and institutions.
 - Call on African CSOs to embark upon information-sharing, awareness creation with respect to the making of the AU and NEPAD.
 - Enhance accountability through the monitoring of Member States' compliance with decision, agreed and ratified for the further consolidation of AU and RECs.
 - The CSOs expressed their concern with respect to insufficient consultation and called for wider consultation among CSOs as well as other stakeholders.
 - The CSOs underscored the imperative of free movement of Africans as the foundation of regional integration in Africa. To this end, CSOs request African governments to remove visa restrictions on the inter-African movement of Africa's peoples.
 - CSOs should maximize the existing system of networking to facilitate inter-country and inter-subregional solidarity among CSOs to advance solidarity at all levels.
 - CSOs demand that the Arusha Declaration on popular participation should be the basis for future engagement.
4. With regard to their further CSO participation in ADF III, the focal group agreed on the following:
 - Accept and endorse the consensus statement from the pre-Conference CSO Symposium. Promote and concretise the commitments proposed in the Consensus.
 - Annex the consensus statement to the ADF III declaration.
5. The CSOs call on the Council of Ministers meeting of the OAU/AU to undertake a pre-Summit consultation in Pretoria with a view to enabling African CSOs to forward their views on issues before the Summit.
6. The CSOs seek a more meaningful interaction on a regular basis with OAU/AU through ECOSOC to enable them to provide an input in the deliberations of the highest organs of the AU.

7. Establish a coordinating committee for the CSOs in preparation for Pretoria and future ADFs with representatives from focal points by regions and sectors, and the Diaspora.
8. The Inter-Africa Group was designated by the CSOs to coordinate the follow-up, in cooperation with the focal points.