



CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS' COMMUNIQUE FROM THE FOURTH CITIZENS' CONTINENTAL CONFERENCE ON THE 12TH AFRICAN UNION SUMMIT, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, 16-17 JANUARY 2009

We, the undersigned civil society organisations (CSOs), membership associations, trade unions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in all the regions within Africa, met for two days between 16-17th January 2009 to consider the issues facing our leaders in the upcoming 12th Ordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government. This upcoming Summit takes place within global financial crisis, fuel price fluctuations, food and ecological crises that threaten to undermine the economic growth and development progress we have seen in Africa over the last few years. For millions of people in Somalia, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zimbabwe among others, these crises are compounded by the persistence of human rights violations, conflicts and governance failure. As such, two Member States – Mauritania and the Republic of Guinea – are suspended as a result of coups d'Etat that violate the principles on which the Union has been founded. The unfortunate post election crises in Kenya and Zimbabwe, contrasted with the successful electoral processes of Angola and Ghana, which were on the whole pronounced free and fair, still cast a shadow on the delicate African democracy and our need as citizens to strengthen the latter. More globally, we met against the backdrop of the Gaza Crisis. Within this context, we offer these specific recommendations for consideration by the Heads of State and Government at the 12th Ordinary Session of the African Union (AU) Summit in the following three areas namely Peace and Security – Eastern DRC, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Darfur – the Social Policy Framework and Union Government.

On the situation of Peace and Security

Concerned that conflicts have continued to rampage selected countries on the continent (with a variety of causes – the most recent being post election violence) and that peace and security has not been established as yet in areas with prolonged conflicts like Somalia, Darfur, the Eastern DRC among others;

Recognising the challenges faced both by international and national organisations attempting to realise peaceful termination of these conflicts and hence initiate the peace-building process;

Cognizant of the factors that lead to conflicts in Africa, essentially Africa being the richest continent in terms of natural resource endowment and yet its inhabitants are impoverished and repeatedly denied their rights;

Acknowledging that empowering CSOs in individual countries can, in the long run, contribute to the overall goal of achieving peace and security in Africa;

Aware of CSOs, given a common forum and grounds to operate, and recognising the positive role that the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) can have as an advisory body to the AU;

Recommend that

1. The AU helps Member States develop and strengthen their capabilities on implementing the preventive component of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

2. Member States actively engage diverse CSOs and institutions of higher learning in their countries on endeavours to generate possible solutions for the achievement of peace, security and human rights in Africa
3. The AU actively monitors the implementation of agreements and protocols that have been signed by Heads of State and Government on human, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the African population;
4. The AU and its Member States provide an enabling environment for Civil Society to freely associate and participate in governance processes aimed at bringing about peace and security, particularly in elections and resource management;
5. The AU assists Member States to develop institutions and structures to strengthen the understanding of the R2P, act on their commitment and support the principle at the forthcoming United Nations General Assembly debate

On Eastern DRC

Concerned of the resumption of violent conflict and war in Eastern DRC, the rising number of civilians fleeing the country, the sexual violence against women, and recruitment of children as soldiers and the foreseeable collapse of government structures in the country;

Noting the discourse and efforts being undertaken by regional, continental and international organisations;

Recognising the complexity of the situation on the ground, given the attempts that have been set forward but failed to bring about a peaceful resolution of the conflict, and the apparent split within the Conseil National pour la Défense du Peuple (CNDP);

Cognisant of the need to deal with the situation at hand by engaging the local and neighbouring parties involved in the conflict;

Recommend that the AU

1. Vigorously condemns the grave violations of human rights abuse committed by the armed parties involved in the conflict and demands Congolese authorities to take all necessary measures to ensure that victims of those crimes have access to proper justice and reparation;
2. Demands that perpetrators of the grave crimes be brought to justice and prosecuted, and to that effect encourages the work of the International Criminal Court (ICC);
3. Condemns every external support (regional, sub-regional and multi-national corporations) to CNDP troops and calls on the latter to strictly implement the ceasefire agreement and fully engage in the political peace process;
4. Supports the Congolese Civil Society action and demands Congolese authorities and CNDP leaders to ensure the safety of human rights defenders;
5. Condemns the illegal exploitation of natural resources by all parties to the conflict and enforces measures including those set forward by groups of experts in the United Nations on the issue;
6. Monitors governments so they can regulate the responsibilities of trans-national corporations with regards to the local populations inhabiting the areas of intervention;
7. Advocates for increased logistical and financial support to MONUC in Eastern DRC;
8. Publicly calls on all parties to the conflict to uphold their obligations to ensure free access for humanitarian aid.

On the situation in Somalia

Concerned with the worsening security situation due to the recommencement of armed conflict and the fragility of the transitional government;

Hopeful of the role and efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Somalia; **Commending** the effort of the United Nations political office for Somalia in supporting and facilitating the implementation of the Djibouti Peace Agreement between the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia and the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS) and in this regard appealing to the militant ARS to embrace dialogue;

Recommend that AU

1. Applauds the role of African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and sacrifices made by the Ugandan, Burundian and Ethiopian troops in Somalia;
2. Strengthen AMISOM by contributing more troops and availing financial and logistical support to ensure that it accomplishes its mandate;
3. Urgently engages the United Nations Security Council to own up to the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security globally and to deploy a strong UN peacekeeping force in Somalia;
4. Appeals to the Somali leadership to embrace the spirit of compromise and dialogue to peacefully resolve their differences and display wisdom in the election of new leadership in an all-inclusive process dialogue and act in the interest of the Somali society which has suffered for too long;
5. Condemns all forms of armed violence and take protective measures to ensure civilian safety, and address the humanitarian crisis and form a commission of enquiry to investigate and document war crimes in Somalia;
6. Joins hands with IGAD Member States in drawing up and enforcing targeted sanctions on spoilers of the peace processes and the violators of the UN arms embargo in Somalia;
7. Condemns acts of piracy off the Somali Coast and supports efforts to resolve the root causes of the Somali piracy menace – the lack of a functional central government in Somalia;

On the situation in Zimbabwe

Deeply concerned about the needless deaths arising from cholera due to failing public service delivery arising from the unresolved political crisis that is causing instability in the region;

Concerned about the escalating politically motivated and organised violence, including the abductions of Civil Society and political activists;

Alarmed about the selective or non-existent response of officials to the violence and impunity of those who are perpetrating it;

Taking note that the AU has continued to ignore the principle of non-indifference and continued to apply the principle of non-interference;

Deeply disturbed that despite 5.1 million Zimbabweans requiring humanitarian assistance, the government continues to frustrate the efforts of NGOs to work freely in areas of need;

Recommend that the AU

1. Formally recognises that the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) mediation is challenged and has not achieved the desired results and that the resolution of the Zimbabwean Crisis should be done under the direct authority of the AU;
2. Decisively deals with the Zimbabwean government's failure to respect African institutions, their decisions, and pushes for a resolution calling for an end to the current political impasse, which has led to further deterioration of the humanitarian situation;
3. Demands the Zimbabwean authorities to ensure uninterrupted and unconditional humanitarian assistance to reach the citizens of the country;

4. Condemns the on-going violence, torture and abductions taking place in Zimbabwe, and calls for the immediate release of Jestina Mukoko and other activists;
5. Intervenes and protects the people of Zimbabwe from all forms of politically motivated violence and makes the realisation of all human rights for all Zimbabweans a reality;

On the situation in Darfur

Concerned about the failure to monitor any improvements on the security situation since the last summit, and the documented 300,000 new population displacements that have occurred within the past year;

Noting the continued non-cooperation of the government of Sudan with regional and international organisations that have tried to bring about peaceful resolution to the situation in Darfur;

Conscious of the sufferings of humanitarian aid workers, human rights activists and Darfurians as a whole;

Aware of the threats set forth by the Government of Sudan on the International Community operating in the country upon the issuance of an arrest warrant for President Omar al Bashir;

Recalling that African countries have the largest number of ratifications to the Rome Statute and must therefore lead in the fight against impunity;

Cautioning the AU not to allow political negotiations to take precedence over issues of human rights;

Recommend that the AU

1. Commits an increased number of peacekeeping forces in Darfur and work with the Government of Sudan to ensure that UN-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) is strengthened as a matter of urgency;
2. Urge all parties to immediately cease hostilities, respect international humanitarian law, and ensure humanitarian agencies to safely access the four million people in need;
3. Does not lend its support to the inappropriate use of Article 16 of the ICC Treaty that would set a bad precedence in Africa and around the world;
4. Immediately signs the cooperation agreement with the ICC to fulfil the outstanding arrest warrants for those implicated in war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide;
5. Gives due attention to the Chad-Sudan conflict and emphasises the need for both governments to forge lasting solutions by complying with recent agreements aimed at improving their relations;

On the Social Policy Framework for Africa

Recognising and commending the African Heads of State and Government for having undertaken bold and impressive commitments to advance social development in Africa by developing the Africa Social Policy Framework;

Noting that the past five years have witnessed noticeable improvements in all sectors of social development and social policy;

Concerned that the adoption of the framework occurs in a background of a Triple 'F' crises of a financial crisis that threatens global recession, fuel price fluctuations, and food emergency in the continent;

Recommend that

1. Heads of State and Government in Africa recognise the central place of social development within economic development;
2. Social protection responses be implemented in the context of the labour market, standards, and collective labour relations, social security and human rights;

3. Due emphasis in the Social Policy Framework document be given to the informal sector, women engaged in small-scale trade and migrant workers;
4. African governments adopt an economic paradigm that links social development to macro-economic policy;
5. African governments prioritise government expenditure to ensure efficient resource use;
6. African governments take responsibility to close the gap between civil society, trade unions and governments to create a united face in claiming international obligations to addressing social development;
7. African governments address conflicts and inequality, which continue to lock out poor and vulnerable populations from the gains of economic growth and development;
8. The AU be at the forefront of strengthening links with other regional blocs, donors and multilateral organisations to mitigate the impact of the current global food and financial crises, and fuel price fluctuations in Africa;

On the Union Government

We are concerned with the limited progress in the establishment of the proposed Union Government and noting in particular the failure to adequately involve the African people in the process;

We welcome the long awaited move to enable the Pan-African Parliament to exercise full legislative powers and have its members elected by Universal Suffrage;

We recommend that

1. The AU Member States popularise the idea of the creation of the Union Government, its challenges and opportunities within African countries and get CSO involvement in the process;
2. State parties engage CSOs to address the question of Member State sovereignty vis à vis the integration process in the continent;
3. Any decision taken at the Summit on the Union Government be fully discussed in each AU Member State;

Signed by the undersigned, 45 national, regional, continental, and international organisations, coalitions and networks from Africa:

ACCORD, Action Aid International Ethiopia, Action for Conflict Transformation, African Monitor, African Youth Association, African Youth Dream Association, Afroflag Youth Vision, All Rounded Development and Capacity Building Association, Arab Program for Human Rights (APHRA)-Sudan, Arab Program for Human Rights (APHRA)-Egypt, Association for Environmental Development in Ethiopia (AEDE), Centre for Peace Building and Socio-economic Resources Development (CePSERD), CRDA – Ethiopia, Collective Responsible Initiative Association(CRIA), Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, FAHAMU/AU Monitor, Zambia Congress of Trade Unions, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Coalition Paysanne de Madagascar, Comité National d’Observation des Elections (KMF-CNOE-Education des citoyens), L’Express de Madagascar, Syndicat Général Maritime de Madagascar, Freedom House South Africa, Great Lakes Parliamentary Forum on Peace – AMANI Forum, Hawa Society for Women, Human Rights Association for the Assistance of Prisoners (HRAAP), Institute for Democratic Governance, Institute of Peace and Security, International Bar Association, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), International Commission of Jurists, National NGOs Forum-Madagascar, Organisation Guinéenne des Droits de l’Homme (OGDH), OSJE, Pan African Youth Union, Peace Journey in Africa 2000 Promotion, SCF Alliance, Social Democratic Forum-Yemen, Société Civile du Congo, Trust Africa, World Federalist Movement – Institute for Global Policy (WFM-IGP), Zimbabwe Christian Alliance, Zimbabwe Exiles Forum and Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum.