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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

Third meeting of the Committee on Human Development  
and Civil Society

4-6 May 2005  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Theme: “Participation and Partnerships for Improving Development  
and Governance in Africa”**

**AIDE-MEMOIRE**

## 1. OVERVIEW

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), within the context of reform of its intergovernmental machinery, created the Committee on Human Development and Civil Society (CHDCS) by resolution 826(XXXII) of 8 May 1997. The Committee is both a technical and a legislative organ. Its members are African experts drawn from governments, private sector and civil society groups and it provides a forum for deepening policy dialogue and interface among the three sectors.

The mandate of the Committee is “to help strengthening civil society and human development. It enables ECA to draw on opinions of experts in the public and private sectors and civil society in its operations. The Committee conducts development and follow-up activities pertaining to global and regional action programs, such as the Copenhagen Declaration and Program of Action of the World Summit for Social Development and the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation. It reviews major trends and issues of regional interest regarding human development and the society. The Committee meets biennially.”

The first meeting of the Committee was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 21 to 23 June 1999. The theme of the meeting was “Popular Participation for Sustainable Social and Human Development.” The main objectives of the meeting were: (1) to review recommendations from the consultative meeting between African civil society organizations and the ECA on the operations and management of the African Centre for Civil Society; (2) to review progress made in the follow-up to the Copenhagen Program of Action; (3) to provide guidance on the working relationships and modalities of cooperation between ECA and the Committee; and (4) undertake analysis of best practices, emerging trends and approaches to facilitate partnerships between the public and private sector in the development processes.

This session adopted a resolution on the Establishment of the African Centre for Civil Society and approved the Constitution and Functions of the Committee.

The second meeting of the Committee took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 26 to 27 May 2003. It was convened, *inter-alia*, to: (1) review best practices in promoting people’s rights to participate in development and governance processes; (2) examine current practices in promoting participation and partnership and make recommendations on how to harness private sector and CSOs capacities to complement government’s efforts towards addressing these practices; and (3) review and examine the engagement of civil society, in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The meeting recommended, among others, the following: (a) close cooperation between the three actors be fostered based on a code of conduct; (b) need to address capacity gaps; (c) more channels of dialogue to be created between users and providers of social services; (d) governments should embrace a bottom-up approach in addressing national development planning issues, thereby including civil society members in the budgetary process.

In line with the above, and in view of the critical importance of participation to ensure sustainable development in Africa, the third meeting of the Committee will be underpinned by a basic theme that deals with the overarching tenets of popular participation in development and governance.

## **2. THE CONTEXT**

The concept of civil society and their potential for contributing to Africa's development has rapidly and progressively achieved prominence in political and developmental discourse, particularly with respect to successive waves of democratization. Civil society is being widely seen as a crucial agent for limiting authoritarian government, strengthening popular empowerment, enforcing political accountability, and in improving the quality and inclusiveness of governance. This has stimulated reconsideration of the limits of state actions and increased the awareness of the potential role of civic organizations in the provision of public goods and services, separately or in partnership with state institutions.

In Africa, while the emergence of civil society organizations is a relatively new phenomenon in most countries, with the advent of democratic regimes there is a growing interest of citizens to participate in economic, political and social decision-making processes. Donors, non-governmental and civil society organizations are increasingly insisting upon participatory approaches in assessing needs, implementing programmes and evaluating government policy impacts on development. Interest in participation is particularly manifested in the process of planning, decision-making, implementation and assessment of public policies towards the attainment of sustainable development. Despite this, there is still a weak definition of how such participation should be effected across different dimensions of public policy formulation and implementation; through what organizational structures; with what representation, roles and processes; and with what demands for capacity development.

Initiatives such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) are a clear indication that Africa's political leadership, at the highest level, acknowledges the need for, and is willing to work in partnership with the private sector and the civil society. However, such partnership can only succeed if civil society is involved in the formulation and execution of national development programmes. Regrettably, on the one hand, national development planning and implementation issues are still mainly the exclusive responsibility of national or sub-national governments, without effective mechanisms for more direct citizen engagement in the process. On the other hand, the capacity of the civil society to fully comprehend and effectively participate in trade negotiations, policy analysis and development dialogue is severely limited.

The above aspects have resulted in a participation and partnership that are intermittent, ad-hoc and ill timed, resulting in largely low level and contradictory contributions from the private sector and civil society in major national policy dialogues.

The CHDCS has an opportunity to help set an agenda to promote accountability between the public and private sector and the civil society, and enhance participation of civil society in governance and development, in order to realize that promising potential towards a more meaningful participatory practices.

## **3. SCOPE AND OBJECTIVE**

The meeting will discuss issues related to participation, collaboration and partnership between civil society, government and private sector with a view to enhance public transparency, strengthen external checks and balances on government and to improve efficiency and accountability in public service delivery. Particular emphasis will be placed on national budgeting process and the provision of water and sanitation services.

The overall objective of the meeting is to discuss practical implementation mechanisms to ensure that civil society participation in development and governance and in the delivery of basic social services are permanent and sustained processes.

#### **4. THEMES AND FORMAT OF THE MEETING**

The shift in development orientation to embrace participation and partnerships as foundations for coping with the enormous development needs of the region is a major challenge. The challenge is to find ways to institutionalize participation and partnerships in development and governance. These issues will be discussed under the theme: “**Participation and Partnerships for Improving Development and Governance in Africa**”. This main theme will be examined under sub-themes as follows:

(i) **A Participatory Approach to National Budgeting**

Under this sub-theme, the Committee will examine three different stages of national budget management, namely: (1) formulation (incorporating policy underpinnings of the budget); (2) implementation, monitoring and tracking; and (3) evaluation/impact assessment on public service delivery and poverty. The meeting will address these issues from conceptual, empirical and policy-making perspectives.

(ii) **Public-private Partnerships for Service Delivery**

The Committee will discuss the state of basic social service delivery, with particular emphasis on water and sanitation and the introduction and evolution of public-private partnership (PPP).

(iii) **Strategies for Promoting Effective Stakeholder Participation in the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)**

While the implementation of the African Peer Review Mechanism would focus primarily on government, the process rely extensively on a participatory and partnership involving the private sector, civil society and other development partners. The meeting will examine current practice with a view to making recommendations on how to enhance participation and partnerships.

The meeting will be organized in **plenary and breakout sessions**, with the plenary sessions providing opportunity for papers to be presented and for general discussions and the breakout sessions, will provide more in-depth analysis of the sub-themes.

**Plenary session I** will be devoted to opening speeches, presentation and general debates of three papers and organizational matters. Participants will be able to make brief presentations on their own country experiences on any of these issues. These discussions will afford participants the opportunity to identify the problems and opportunities to their unique situation, and guide developing specific action plans and recommendations to be adopted by the meeting. **Plenary session II** will consolidate the discussions from the working groups agree on a set of recommendations on how to deepen participation and partnerships in national budgeting and delivery of social services with emphasis on water and sanitation. **Plenary session III** will discuss statutory and organizational issues as well as any other business including the date and venue of the next meeting, the adoption of the report and the closing of the meeting.

**Breakout sessions** will be organized in order to allow participants to examine in-depth issues presented in the plenary sessions. Each breakout session will have discussants to highlight the key issues to stimulate the discussions in the two (2) working group sessions as follows:

**Working group 1:** - Strategies for Promoting Effective Stakeholder Participation in the APRM: A Participatory Approach to National Budgeting

**Working group 2:** - Strategies for Promoting Effective Stakeholder Participation in the APRM: Public-Private Partnership (PPP) for Social Services Delivery: Water and Sanitation

## **5. DOCUMENTATION**

Background papers have been prepared for each of the thematic sessions and will be sent to all participants. These papers will be provided six weeks in advance of the Committee meeting. The papers to guide the discussion on sub-theme one, two and three, as well as the general discussions are as follows:

- Participatory approach to national budgeting
- Public-private partnerships to social service delivery: water and sanitation
- Strategies for promoting effective stakeholder participation in the APRM
- Issues paper summarizing the key issues to be covered by the meeting
- Report on statutory and other organizational issues

## **6. EXPECTED OUTCOME**

Building upon the momentum of the two previous committee meetings, the third meeting of the Committee is likely to provide a pivotal opportunity for crystallizing an emerging consensus on central components of civil society participation in planning and delivery of basic social services in Africa. In this respect, it is expected that first, the meeting will suggest realistic and affordable national and local regulatory frameworks to strengthen the involvement of civil society in development and governance processes and to engage in a constructive collaboration and partnership arrangements with the government. Secondly, evaluate the capacity of civil society to participate effectively in national policy dialogue forums as well as in planning and delivery of basic social services. Finally, the meeting will recommend a plan of action for civil society capacity development at the national, sub-regional and regional levels.

Based on the general conclusions and recommendations of the meeting, ECA will develop guidelines on feasible forms of private sector and CSOs partnering with governments in policy formulation, implementation and delivery of basic social services and conditions for their realization. An ad-hoc experts group meeting will review the guidelines before dissemination to member States and other stakeholders.

## **7. PARTICIPANTS**

The meeting will bring together civil society and other stakeholder representatives from across Africa, including high-level government officials from the ministries of economic planning and national development, health, water, local government, and public work, private sector and

civil society organizations. Other participants drawn from regional and international organizations will be invited on an observer status. Account will be taken to balance participation in terms of gender and experience and involvement in issues under consideration, particularly at local and community level.

**Since this is an intergovernmental committee, all invitees are expected to meet their cost of participation, including air tickets and subsistence.**

## **8. WORKING LANGUAGE**

The meeting will be conducted in English and French, with simultaneous interpretation of deliberations in both languages.

## **9. VENUE AND DATE**

The meeting will be held at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 25 to 27 April 2005.

## **10. CONTACTS**

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