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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

**STATUTORY AND ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES**

## **Statutory and Organizational Issues**

### **1. Mandate and Organization of the Committee**

1. The Conference of African Ministers responsible for Economic and Social Development and Planning in keeping with its mandate to establish liaison with appropriate inter-governmental organizations in Africa through the adoption of Resolution 826 (XXXII) of 8 May 1997, through which the ministers structured the Economic Commission for Africa's (ECA) policy organs created the Committee on Human Development and Civil Society (CHDCS).

2. The Committee's mission is to help strengthen the 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 civil society".

3. It serves as a forum for reviewing specific issues related to human and social development as well as popular participation and the role of civil society. In these respects, the committee is to strengthen coherence of the ECA work programme in the areas of human and social development, popular participation and partnership as well as deepen policy dialogue among the various development actors-government, private sector and civil society. The Committee is generally scheduled to meet biennially. The Terms of Reference of this Committee are as follows:

- (a) Assist members States to promote measures to follow-up the implementation of the regional and globally agreed programmes of action in social and human development and popular participation,
- (b) Provide advice to the Commission in formulating its work programmes in the area of human development and popular participation,
- (c) Encourage the integration of social and human dimensions into development policies, plans and programmes at both macroeconomic and sectoral levels,
- (d) Identify and highlight the major economic and social development issues and concerns with a view to promoting policies and strategies for human development and popular participation and partnership in development.

4. Since the establishment of the Committee new developments have taken place that require the attention and decision of the Committee members. First, is the shift in ECA's programme focus from development management to governance, and the changes that have taken place at the member states level, particularly with respect to the adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and its African Peer Review Mechanisms

which are anchored on democratization and good governance as important prerequisites for accelerating Africa's development and growth. Second, since the Committee brings together public sector, private sector and civil society officials, the broad scope of its focus has created difficulties in identifying the most appropriate host ministry in each country. As a result, the institutional mechanisms for implementation of Committee's decisions at national level are very weak or inexistent and explain why countries are yet to replicate Committee on Human Development and Civil Society's activities as envisaged in the Committee's Constitution<sup>1</sup>. Third, low level of attendance at Committee meetings has continued to undermine the importance and relevance of the Committee. This is particularly due to the issue of funding of participants to attend these meetings. The prevailing situation require that this meeting takes a fresh look at the Committee's operations with a view to make proposal for it to become more relevant to the present needs and realities and to decide on the most appropriate national government structure to serve as the host for the Committee's activities.

## **2. The Status of the African Centre for Civil Society (ACCS)**

5. The case for bringing civil society in the center of Africa's development process has even been made stronger by the United Nations Secretary General in a number of areas. In his report on arrangements and practices for the interaction of non-governmental organizations in all activities of the United Nations system, he highlighted measures for enhancing close collaboration and dialogue between the United Nations and Civil society and on how to improve civil society's access to information and increased participation. The secretary-general in his comprehensive initiative for Africa-the UN System-Wide Special Initiative for Africa-made the strengthening of civil society and the promotion of popular participation core priorities. He also requested United Nations system organizations to build alliances with organizations of civil society, promoting development, democracy and peace building. Last but not least, member countries at United Nations Millennium Summit through the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals declared their commitment to make the organization a people's organization, improve its relationship with them and finally resolved to- give full opportunities to non-governmental organizations and other non-state actors to make their indispensable contribution to the Organization's work.

6. In support of this vision, ECA redefined its mission and work to emphasize the complementary and reinforcing roles of the state, private sector and civil society. The Committee on Human Development and Civil Society established with the objective of brining together the government, private sector and civil society provides a platform for dialogue over the role of civil society's participation in development and governance. Beyond these, the African Centre for Civil Society (ACCS)<sup>2</sup> was also envisaged as an institutional framework to deepen ECA/CSO collaboration and to strengthen the participation of civil society organizations in development and governance.

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<sup>1</sup>See annex 1

<sup>2</sup> See annex 2

7. Most of the initiatives undertaken so far have helped in a number of ways; for example, some of our studies have helped to sensitize on the need for participatory development in which civil society has a major role to play, others have provided opportunities for CSOs to get to know each other and promoted their relevance and legitimacy. Unfortunately, transforming ACCS from an idea to a functioning and structured arrangement for bridging ECA and CSOs on the one hand and linking CSOs to CSOs on the other hand has been fraught with some difficulties, including faulty design.

8. In the light of new developments and realities, the Committee should assess the continued relevance of ACCS and provide direction as to the future status of ACCS and how it can optimally dispense its services to Africa CSOs and effectively provide a platform for rallying CSOs to the development and governance agenda.

### **3. Work Programme of the Development Policy Management Division**

#### **(i) Objective of the Subprogramme on “Strengthening Development Management”**

9. The main objective of the sub-programme is to improve good governance practices for establishing an enabling environment for all sectors of society to participate in the development process and consolidate the foundations for sustainable development in Africa.

#### **(ii) Main activities undertaken in the recent past**

10. In recent years, the emphasis of the sub-programme has shifted from development management (public sector management, private sector competitiveness, and civil society participation) to good governance. This shift is a response to the growing consensus that good governance is a prerequisite for equitable, inclusive and sustainable economic and social development of Africa. The adoption of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) as the development framework for African countries has underscored the importance of good governance on the continent. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) also state that success in meeting the objective of reducing poverty by half in 2015 depends, inter alia, on good governance within each country.

11. In order to inform better African policy makers and other stakeholders on issues related to good governance, the ECA has undertaken a major and ambitious project *Assessing and Monitoring Progress towards Good Governance in Africa*. Using a scientific and rigorous approach, the project measures and monitors progress towards good governance. As of December 2003, the project was completed in 28 African countries, resulting in the production of national governance reports and country profiles on good governance. The national reports underwent several validation steps: national launch workshops, national stakeholders workshops and sub-regional workshops. They are expected to become “living” documents to be used by policy makers and other stakeholders to address the key findings and recommendations. One of the unique features of the national governance reports and the AGR is the painstaking attempt to identify the institutional capacity deficits at the country, sub-regional and regional levels and to demonstrate the linkages between capacity endowment/deficit and good governance in Africa.

12. In the recently published document, *Striving for Good Governance in Africa*, ECA presents an overview of the project and identifies 10 priority areas for action in building capable and accountable African states. The first *African Governance Report (AGR)*, to be released in early 2005, will present an exhaustive survey of the project.

13. The main results of this work were discussed at the Fourth African Development Forum (ADF IV) in October 2004. The Forum presented the first opportunity for an open and in-depth discussion on the different features of the governance challenges facing African countries. As a result, the consensus on the need of capable states was broadened and deepened. The Forum was preceded by the Symposium on Youth and Governance. This symposium represented a golden opportunity to engage in a dialogue with the citizens and leaders of tomorrow. The discussion focused on how to translate their interest to participate in the reconstruction of the continent into concrete actions. To this end, issues related to HIV/AIDS, education and employment as well as democracy and governance were debated.

14. The sub-programme has also played a key role in the development and conceptualization underlying the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), an important component of the NEPAD initiative. For instance, ECA has been heavily involved in assisting the APR Secretariat and member States to undertake technical assessments in the preparation for and participation in the process. This has entailed reviews of the policies and practices of participating states to ascertain that progress is being made towards achieving the mutually agreed goals and compliance with adopted political, economic and corporate governance values, codes and standards, as outlined in the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance document.

**(iii) Outcomes, impact of activities, continuing challenges for the near future**

15. Overall, the perception gathered in the study is that governance is getting better in African countries over the past decade. The political space has been liberalized; human rights and the rule of law are more widely respected. Moreover, the media and civil society are advancing in many countries. The project showed however that the results do not apply in a uniform manner across countries included in the study. Some have made much more progress than others.

16. Citizens of African countries also highlighted the areas of governance that need further attention on the part of policy makers and other stakeholders. For example, much more could be done in terms of decentralization of government structures. In addition, the study showed that the efficiency of government services, control of corruption, and the transparency and accountability of the civil services remain of serious concerns to Africans.

17. The work of ECA in the domain of governance constitutes a rich and informative source of data for African policy makers. It provides them with a unique African perspective on the current situation. The priority areas identified by the project contribute to voicing a clearer and stronger African position on how to go about improving the situation on the continent.

18. Although, African countries have made significant progress towards good governance, persistent poverty, absence of lasting peace, and structural deficits in governance systems and processes in many countries render the continent's benefits of good governance fragile. The challenge, therefore, is to ensure that Africa's strides towards good governance are sustained through a focus on building a capable state, a state endowed with transparent and accountable political and economic systems, efficient public institutions, and adequate checks and balances among the different arms of government.

**(iv) Work Priorities for the biennium 2006 - 2007**

19. Good governance is the main requirement necessary for mobilizing, securing, and optimizing the management of resources. Political and economic governance represent the central point in implementing the NEPAD initiative. Against this background, current and future activities and outputs of the sub-programme will be oriented toward supporting and strengthening the capable state, one with transparent, accountable political and economic systems, and efficient public institutions providing an enabling environment for the private sector and civil society to play their respective roles in development process. To that end, the sub-programme will need to undertake a set of strategies related to political governance, economic and corporate governance and institutional effectiveness.

20. The sub-programme will focus on promoting and monitoring good governance, strengthening public financial management capacities and promoting the role of non-governmental stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society, in development processes. In this respect, among the outputs planned for the next biennium, there will be:

21. **Policy review and dialogue**, mainly through the Committee on Human Development and Civil Society, which enables interactive engagement among experts in the public, private sectors and civil society. The Fourth meeting will be held and will address issues in the following areas: (i) Strategies for enhancing African small and medium enterprises' SMEs' productivity and competitiveness with a view to enabling them to participate effectively in both domestic and global markets; (ii) governance policies and strategies promoting efficiency and accountability in the planning and delivery of public services in Africa and (iii) political parties and public policies.

22. **Africa Governance Report.** The second edition of the *AGR* will be issued in 2007 and will assess further the progress towards capable and accountable states in 12 additional African countries. The results will directly feed into the APRM process for those countries. Accordingly, there will be an additional 12 country reports and country profiles on good governance.

23. **Research and analysis to** document and disseminate information to create sufficient awareness and influence adoption of best practices enhance governance will focus on the following:

**24. Legislative and regulatory framework on good economic and corporate governance.** Parliaments represent the best opportunities for all societal forces to be represented at the national level in the policy-making process, since points of entry into the executive and judiciary are more restrictive. Since the parliamentarians are the “trustees” of the public mandate, it is assumed that they will uphold national and public interests over other narrow and parochial interests. Parliamentarians, through enactment of national legislation, and oversight of the executive organs, are expected to lay down the fundamentals for establishing peace, security, democracy, good governance and sound economic management. They are expected to take measures to promote and overcome social inequalities, eliminate poverty and promote sustainable and equitable development for all citizens. In a nutshell, Parliaments provide arena for peaceful resolution of conflicts or compromise on divisive issues within nation-states.

25. The work of the sub-programme in this regard will reflect on the legislature as an important arm of government and its crucial role in establishing necessary checks and balances to the Executive. It will expand on issues of independence, legislative activism, standards of transparency and accountability, training and skill-building needs, particularly in the areas of policy analysis and review and budget control. In particular, the sub-programme will study the role of parliament in the design and implementation of a medium term expenditure framework to guide the public expenditure strategy. Among the other activities and products, the sub-programme will analyze strategies to enhance stakeholders’ participation in the policy formulation and implementation. In addition, they will prepare a document for the promotion of codes and standards of good economic and corporate governance.

**26. Political Parties and Public Policies.** The sub-programme will analyze how political parties have helped in shaping public policies in the contemporary era in Africa through the articulation of policy issues, their engagement in parliamentary discourse and their pursuit of party programs in the political arena. It would propose ways and policy options on how to strengthen the capacity of political parties to lead and contribute to public policies and through it, promote the welfare and development of their societies.

**27. Political Parties and Good Governance in Africa – Lessons Learned and the Way Forward.** The sub-programme will also take an introspective and holistic view of political parties in Africa in the post-colonial era and how they have furthered the course of good governance on the continent. It would through a comparative analysis of Africa’s current experience with its past, explicate the lessons learned so far, the problems and challenges confronted by political parties and how they can be better institutionalized and become an effective vehicle for good governance and democratic stability in Africa.

**28. Mechanisms for the implementation of sound corporate governance for the promotion of strong and vibrant private sector in Africa:** On the basis of a strong mandate emanating from ADF IV Consensus Statement, this document explores ways to promote private sector activity in Africa. These include addressing and removing the bottlenecks identified in the country reports; and ways of strengthening or introducing sound

legislative and regulatory frameworks. The ADF IV highlighted the need for the private sector itself to adhere to sound corporate governance issues including accountability and transparency—issues that assume particular significance in the extractive industries and state-owned enterprises. The publication will explore ways of encouraging the private sector to comply with codes and standards of good corporate governance by using both incentives and other enforcement mechanisms.

29. **Harnessing Traditional Governance Institutions:** This publication will investigate the role of traditional institutions and authorities in the modern governance system in Africa. Widely considered archaic and anachronistic, there is growing evidence that such systems and networks are key in mediating the dualistic co-existence of tradition and modernity that characterizes African societies. This report will analyze the different typologies of traditional governance institutions and systems and their relevance and potential for good governance and democratization in Africa. The publication will form the conceptual basis of a project to map out traditional systems of governance in Africa, including their consensual decision-making models. As such, an initial draft will be peer reviewed through symposia at the sub-regional levels.

30. **Institutional mechanisms for enhancing public participation in promoting effectiveness and accountability in policy implementation:** This publication underscores the need for efficiency, transparency and accountability in the discharge of responsibilities at all levels of the state apparatus. The dividend from good governance is measured against the effective implementation of development policies and programs. The effective discharge of government functions, require establishing the necessary mechanisms for holding people in positions of trust accountable and this includes developing effective governance institutions incorporating public, private and civil society participation in policy implementation.

(v) **Expected benefits to member States in the longer term**

31. While the primary responsibility for implementation of the good governance programme rests with African governments themselves, regional organizations such as ECA, AU, and AfDB can provide invaluable support to reinforce and accelerate that process. In this respect, the sub-programme will continue to assist member States through the Good Governance project and the *AGR*, with a view to applying objective criteria for measuring and monitoring good governance in Africa. In the long run, the *AGR* will help African countries to develop, sustain and internalize the norms of good governance within the public and private realms; enhance analysis and dissemination of information and best practices. With respect to the APRM, the sub-programme will continue to assist member States in (i) providing relevant advise to the APRM Panel and Secretariat on the implementation of the APRM process; (ii) assisting member States to build and maintain a database of information, including providing access to data sources, and sharing of information and experiences; and (iii) providing support to countries in the preparation for and participation in APRM.