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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Fourth meeting of the Committee on Human Development
and Civil Society

22 - 23 November 2007
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Theme: “Public Management and Good Governance in Africa”

AIDE-MEMOIRE

1. BACKGROUND

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), within the context of the reform of its intergovernmental machinery that took place in 1997, 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 of the Commission. Its members are African experts drawn from governments, private sector and civil society groups. It provides a forum for deepening policy dialogue and interface among the three sectors.

The mandate of the Committee is, among others, to help strengthen civil society and human development activities in Africa. It enables the Commission to capture the opinion of experts from the public and private sectors and civil society on its operations. It reviews activities of regional interest regarding human development and civil society as contained in ECA's program of work. The Committee meets biennially.

The first meeting of the Committee was held in Addis Ababa, from 21 to 23 June 1999. The theme of the meeting was "Popular Participation for Sustainable Social and Human Development." This session approved the Constitution and Functions of the Committee and adopted a resolution on the Establishment of the African Centre for Civil Society.

The second meeting of the Committee took place in Addis Ababa, from 26 to 27 May 2003. 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; and (d) governments should embrace a bottom-up approach in addressing national development planning issues, thereby including civil society members in the budgetary process.

The third meeting of the Committee was held in Addis Ababa, from 4 to 6 May 2005. The meeting was organized under the theme "Participation and Partnerships for Improving Development and Governance in Africa." The overall objective of the meeting was to find ways and means of strengthening participation and partnerships in development and governance processes with a view to enhance public transparency, strengthen external checks and balances on government and to improve efficiency and accountability in public service delivery. Participants expressed the need to make the Committee more functional as defined in the operational guidelines adopted at its inaugural meeting in 1999.

In 2006, ECA undertook a reform exercise, which came into effect on 3 August 2006 aimed at repositioning the Commission to strategically realign its program priorities with the priorities of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Union (AU). This was necessary for the Commission in order to achieve results in the most efficient and effective manner according to the overall United Nations system reform program, as well as the renewed international commitment to improving Africa's development prospects. The reform exercise outlined how the Commission is reorganizing itself to better address Africa's development challenges, and how it plans to deepen its work in the identified priority areas. It also highlighted how the Commission plans to work with the AU, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and other development partners to address the continent's development priorities.

As a result of the reform exercise, the Development Policy and Management Division (DPMD) was restructured and renamed as Governance and Public Administration Division (GPAD) to reflect the new priority areas of the Commission. GPAD is organized into four sections,

namely Public Administration, Civil Society, African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Support Unit, and Private Sector and Enterprise Development. The overall objective of the Division is to promote good governance practices for all sectors of society including civil service, public sector, private sector and civil society, and to support the APRM process.

In line with the above, and in view of the crucial role the Committee plays both as a technical and a legislative organ, the fourth session of the Committee will be held under the theme **“Public Management and Good Governance in Africa.”**

2. OBJECTIVE

The main objective of the fourth meeting of the Committee on Human Development and Civil Society is two-fold. First, to review ECA’s activities in the area of Governance and Public Administration as contained in the Work Program for 2006-2007 and proposed activities for the biennium 2008-2009. Secondly, to review and discuss a proposal from ECA Secretariat related to the new structure, role and mandate of the Committee with a view to realign its activities according to ECA’s business plan.

3. THE CONTEXT

The success of the State in providing basic social services and protecting and promoting a life of dignity rests in its ability to provide stable and enabling institutions. Efficient public management, good governance and sound institutions are central to promoting economic development, increasing access of the population to basic services, eradicating poverty, enforcing human rights legislation, and enhancing popular participation in the development process. The adoption of NEPAD by African leaders as the framework for the continent’s development has also underscored the importance of good governance as a prerequisite for equitable, inclusive and sustainable economic and social development.

Since 1990, several African countries have made significant progress towards good governance. However, the benefits remain fragile as a result of persistent poverty, absence of lasting peace, and structural deficits in governance systems. The challenge, therefore, is to ensure that Africa’s strides towards good governance are sustained through a focus on building a capable state, one that is endowed with transparent, accountable political and economic systems, and efficient public institutions to provide an enabling environment for all stakeholders to play their respective roles in national efforts to consolidate the foundations of sustainable development.

Against this background, ECA’s work in the areas of governance and public administration over the next two years will continue to focus on (i) promoting and monitoring progress towards good governance in all its dimensions – political, economic and corporate, (ii) strengthening the capable state to build efficient public institutions, (iii) strengthening public financial management capacities, (iv) establishing an enabling environment for the private sector and civil society to play their rightful roles in the development process; and (v) to support the APRM process.

While the African Governance Report (AGR) will remain the main vehicle for monitoring progress towards transparent and accountable governance in Africa, including sound public management and popular participation in the development process, the Commission will also continue to provide technical assistance and policy advisory services to member States on political, economic and corporate governance and institutional effectiveness issues with particular focus on addressing the capacity deficits in Africa’s public institutions identified in the ECA governance country surveys and in country assessments under the APRM. Other issues such as the fight against

corruption, the promotion of the APRM process, popular participation and private sector development, will feature prominently in ECA's activities during the next two years. ECA will also align its governance capacity building support to the needs and priorities of member States as identified through the peer review process and work with the African Peer Review Secretariat and other Strategic Partners in assisting African countries to accede to the peer review process.

Policy studies will address key governance themes like institutional mechanisms for promoting effectiveness and accountability in policy formulation and implementation; policy options on strengthening the capacity of political parties to lead and contribute to public policies; harnessing traditional governance institutions for improved governance; and best practices in improving institutional effectiveness in combating corruption in Africa.

Technical assistance will be provided to African countries in (a) articulating widely accepted ethical codes through education and training in public service ethics; (b) enhance internal organizational structures in the public service; (c) strengthen public accountability institutions within and outside the Public Service; and (d) strengthen CSOs participation in improving good government practices for establishing an enabling environment and solid foundation for peace and sustainable development in Africa.

In this respect, the CHDCS has an opportunity to help the Commission in setting an agenda that would realize the promising potential towards a more meaningful and sustainable development of the continent.

4. ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED

In addition to the proposed new structure and orientation of the Committee and proposed activities for the biennium 2008-2009, the review of ECA program activities in the area of Governance and Public Administration will be based on three parliamentary documentations namely:

(i) **Political parties and public policies**

The paper discusses the role of political parties in development process including the formulation and implementation of public policies.

The ECA research-based work on governance, the African Governance Report (AGR), has amply demonstrated that democratic politics and practices have taken a significant leap in Africa in the last two decades. Multiparty democracy with competitive elections has been enthroned in many African countries and the political space has been gradually liberalized. Despite these advances challenges to political governance remain in many countries. The democratic process is often fragile, uneven and tenuous and remains weak and barely institutionalized.

(ii) **Removing economic and corporate governance bottle necks to private sector development**

The paper analyzes existing economic and corporate governance bottlenecks and constraints, including issues of access to finance, land and other production factors, as well as legal and regulatory framework in doing business in Africa.

The beneficial effects of a vibrant private sector include, among others: improved efficiency in which society's scarce resources are allocated; the creation of decent employment; reduction in

poverty; sustained economic growth and development; mobilization of domestic and foreign savings; and the development of effective public-private partnerships in the provision of infrastructure, public goods and merit goods. Despite this, the private sector in Africa has, and continues to face enormous challenges, including (i) high costs of doing business caused by weak institutional and regulatory frameworks, strong administrative barriers, weak and underdeveloped infrastructure facilities, and systemic corruption and (ii) uncertainty and high non-business risks resulting from political and macroeconomic instability.

(iii) **Strategies for promoting accessibility and accountability in public service delivery**

The paper discusses the importance of good regulatory governance in the development of infrastructure and public utilities in Africa.

In Africa, as in many developing countries, public services such as water, electricity, and telephone are still owned and operated as monopolies (be it state or private). The rationale for these monopolies could be found in the economic concept of “economies of scale”. However, the establishment of an effective regulatory system that can simulate a free or a competitive market is essential to mitigate the negative social and economic effects of monopolies.

5. FORMAT OF THE MEETING

The meeting will be organized in plenary sessions. This is to afford participants the opportunity to consider and discuss all the papers submitted before them and reach a common understanding on how to better address the emerging African development challenges and demands from member States.

6. EXPECTED OUTCOME

In view of the new program orientation of the Commission, including that of the Division, the fourth meeting of the Committee is expected to: (a) reflect on the new mandate of GPAD and to chart its future strategic direction; (b) suggest how the Division could improve its governance and public administration activities and working relations with the AU, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and other development partners to better enhance national capacity and capability and to support the APRM process.

Based on the general conclusions and recommendations of the Committee, the Division will define the new functions of the Committee, draft the Statute and determine the parent ministries in the countries to be represented at the Committee. The draft Statute shall be submitted for consideration and approval to the Committee at its fifth session before dissemination to member States and other stakeholders.

7. PARTICIPANTS

The meeting will bring together high-level government officials from the ministries of justice, civil service, economic planning and national development, NEPAD/APRM coordinating units, private sector, civil society organizations and other stakeholder representatives from across Africa. Other participants drawn from sub-regional and international organizations will be invited as observers. Account will be taken to balance participation in terms of gender, experience and involvement in issues under consideration.

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

8. WORKING LANGUAGES

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

9. DATE AND VENUE

The meeting will take place from 19 to 20 November 2007 at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC) in Addis Ababa.

10. CONTACTS

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