

**AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM 2007**  
**"Democratizing Governance at Regional and Global Level**  
**to Achieve the MDGs "**  
**UNECA Conference Centre**  
**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 22 - 24 March 2007**



## **FINAL STATEMENT**

- 1.** We, more than 250 participants of the African Civil Society Forum (AfCSF) 2007, representing over 150 NGO/CSOs from 32 countries of the 5 African Regions and 4 from other regions of the world, gathered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 22-24 March 2007, to participate in the African Civil Society Forum 2007 on the theme «Democratizing Governance at Regional and Global Level to Achieve the MDGs». The Forum was convened by the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO) together with the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) and in cooperation with the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Union (AU).
- 2.** In convening the Forum, CONGO and FEMNET, were implementing their mandate to increase the participation of NGOs and other civil society organizations whose contributions they believe are essential to a truly global community. One of the objectives of the Forum was to establish an independent space to give African civil society a larger voice at both regional and global levels.
- 3.** The AfCSF 2007, envisioned as a multidimensional, multi-sectorial, multi-faceted event, was organized to develop a practical framework for African civil society to formulating and advancing their advocacy strategies at national, regional and global levels.
- 4.** We all come from countries with different cultures and religions, different levels of social and economic development. Some of us suffer from internal conflicts and external threats, while others enjoy peace and stability. Some of our countries are classified by the United Nations as "least developed countries", while others are more economically advanced. Yet, despite all differences between us, through the AfCSF 2007 we had the opportunity to share our common concerns and aspirations, and how we can forge partnerships and build solidarity across regions, to promote the goals of peace, human rights, justice, equitable and sustainable development.

### **MDGs**

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**5.** We reaffirmed the commitment to achieve the Millennium Development Goals based on the largest gathering of Heads of State at the Millennium Summit. Participants spoke of MDGs +, examining implementation of MDGs from a rights-based approach, which needed to include gender equality and employment (decent work) issues.

**6.** The Forum in Africa comes at a critical time. Acknowledging that at the current trend the MDGs will not be met, the Forum urged participants to a much deeper engagement and more meaningful partnerships with their Governments and international institutions at regional and global levels.

### **Democratizing Governance**

**7.** Acknowledging the values and importance of open, transparent and people-owned democratic processes, the Forum participants stressed the relevance of good governance, the participation of civil society and protection of human rights as key and prerequisite for sustained progress in the achievement of the MDGs.

**8.** The overarching theme of global governance was addressed through three thematic lenses: *Peace and Security; Governance and Human Rights; and Development, Trade and Finance issues.*

### **UN Reform**

**9.** Having considered the report of the SG «*In larger freedom*» which gives equal weight and value to peace, development and human rights issues, we acknowledged the strong recognition of the role of civil society in the reform process. We also appreciated the new impetus and support for civil society engagement coming from the UNECA. However, we are also aware that there are efforts by some Member States to arbitrarily curtail the voice of civil society and this should be vehemently opposed.

### **Gender**

**10.** In recognizing that the gender perspective and gender equality have not fully been mainstreamed into prior civil society gatherings, we commit ourselves to work towards the development of a coherent policy of gender mainstreaming, that is inter-generational into all advocacy policies and strategies.

### **Youth**

**11.** We affirm the challenges coming from youth, agents of social and political transformation, and strongly encourage and support their participation at all levels. The future of Africa is linked to the involvement of young people and to their dynamics into the development process.

### **Children**

**12.** The Forum encouraged and supported the inclusion of children issues and participation. Children are the future and if their issues and participation are not deliberately included the world will be worse and more chaotic than today. *"We have yet to move from the hand-writing assertions that war is terrible for children to the unequivocal assertion that war is completely unacceptable for children, and that whenever there is a conflict there has to be the most dramatic series of emergency interventions to prevent what is happening to children. The general hand-wringing about the tragedy of war-which never seems to see child vulnerability as one of the most egregious casualties – has to come to an end in the international community"* - Stephen Lewis, UN special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa

## **People with Disabilities (PWD)**

**13.** We recognized that people with disabilities need special recognition, and we strongly affirmed their participation and contributions at every level. We urged all multi-stakeholders to include the disability groups in all advocacy initiatives and provide basic provisions for the protection and promotion of fundamental human rights and freedoms for PWDs.

## **Strengthening CS and self-assessment**

**14.** We recognized the need to put our own house in order in relation to legitimacy, accountability and transparency, both at the collective as well as the individual level, in order to fully realize civil society's role of critical and constructive engagement in processes furthering peace, development and human rights issues.

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS: GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ACTION**

**15.** After three days of rich and lively discussions, the participants looked at the findings of Forum proceedings and developed a framework for the following recommendations<sup>1</sup>:

### **16. Peace and Human Security for Achieving the MDGs**

#### **Recalling**

Article 20 of the Protocol establishing the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU): "*The Peace and Security Council shall encourage non-governmental organizations, community-based and civil society organizations, particularly women's organizations, to actively participate in the efforts aimed at promoting peace, security and stability in Africa. When necessary, such organizations may be invited to address the Peace and Security Council*";

the following recommendations were issued:

#### **A. To the African Union**

- i. The AU PSC should implement the provisions of the Protocol, in particular the mainstreaming role of the CSOs in policy processes of the PSC;
- ii. Improve the working method of the PSC to fully realize in a transparent way CSOs participation in all efforts aimed at promoting peace, security and stability in Africa;
- iii. Be guarantors of Peace Agreements, in particular in creating monitoring mechanisms with the participation of relevant national and regional NGOs/CSOs;
- iv. Involve children, according to their capacities, in decisions relating to peace negotiation which allows them to address their issues that threaten their security and peace;
- v. Develop specific orientation programs for children in conflict areas and involve them and their issues in Peace Missions;
- vi. Address the crisis in security forces regarding orphans and vulnerable children;

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<sup>1</sup> The rich content of our discussions and the details of our plans for the future are contained in reports from plenary session, w-shops and round tables which will be annexed to a more comprehensive report.

- vii. Abolish school fees, registration fees in all states to enable orphans to enroll and receive personal care and self worth;

- **Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army Rebels**

- viii. Be part of the monitoring team in order to build the confidence of the rebels (LRA, Uganda) and also to monitor the secession of hostilities agreement;
- ix. Involve African women in the on-going peace negotiations between the government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army Rebels (LRA).

#### **B. To Civil Society**

- i. Expand the participation in monitoring and evaluation from shadow reporting to full roles in drafting, editing and issuing the main report from the beginning;
- ii. Take more ownership and responsibility for realizing the role of civil society as partners;
- iii. Involve the Private Sector in peace-building processes by taking active measures of inviting them to all preparatory/information gathering meetings;
- iv. Promote peace education through tapes and videos that people can watch and learn; create platforms to exchange best practices;
- v. Empower CSOs and NGOs operating at the grassroots level;
- vi. Encourage people, in particular human rights organizations, addressing the Darfur disaster to pay the same attention to other conflict areas in Africa (e.g. Somalia, Zimbabwe);
- vii. Consider the situation of vulnerable groups, in particular PWDs and the Internally Displaced Persons along with the refugees;
- viii. Link the MDGs to the PRSPs<sup>2</sup> (no consensus on this proposal, see below);
- ix. Insert AIDS prevention as an integral part of all humanitarian programs;
- x. Provide psycho-social interventions to children who are deeply traumatized and emotionally scarred;
- xi. Establish a response mechanism for the orphaned child to the consequences of AIDS, in addition to the need to urgently respond to the child soldiers.

#### **C. To the United Nations**

- i. Lobby the Security Council to address the vulnerable circumstances of children perpetuated by the use of small arms and light weapons to create an embargo on small arms and light weapons.

### **17. Governance and human rights based approach to the development agenda**

#### **A. To the African Governments**

- i. Assume full responsibility for the protection of human rights and for the protection of its own people, rather than only its government, according to the "**responsibility to protect**", adopted by all heads of State at the 2005 Summit;
- ii. Introduce human rights education into all schools curricula at earliest age;
- iii. Articulate national policies within an appropriate framework to address "internally displaced persons" which has become a major issue on human rights and good governance;
- iv. Adopt a rights based approach to MDGs in integrating human rights into all actions for development and into all enterprise development set up for the realization of the MDGs;

<sup>2</sup> Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers

- v. Create multidisciplinary research teams to articulate and understand MDG concepts in national languages so they become efficient vectors because originally from our culture and are able to promote good governance and transparency;
- vi. Establish specific MDGs strategies to enhance the realization of MDGs in post conflict countries;
- vii. Create focal office on MDGs and provide it with a trust fund for the MDGs to help post conflict countries and regions to aid the process of monitoring and advising the CSOs and government on the activities related to the eight-goals strategy; [AU, UN and (even CONGO)]; and
- viii. Encourage and improve public-private partnerships (between state and non-state actors) to promote a democratic culture and bring it deep into the awareness and understanding of African people.

#### **B. To Civil Society**

- i. Empower CSOs at grassroots and facilitate their building-up capacities, expertise and skills in intervening and preventing human rights abuses;
- ii. Promote education for civic responsibilities in accessible languages;
- iii. Encourage stronger engagement by civil society in the participation and promotion of APRM;
- iv. Urge governments to join the APRM process;
- v. Participate in elaboration of APRM national reports and promote stronger youth involvement in APRM process;
- vi. Create and promote income generation activities designed to allow discriminated and marginalized groups to find markets for their products; and
- vii. Engage in quality training and capacity building on market tendencies to enable people to exporting end products and not only commodities

#### **C. To the United Nations**

- i. Encourage all UN Agencies working within the framework of humanitarian aid to Africa to promote civil society driven and owned projects, giving priority to local communities to provide and distribute food supplies, in order to support local production and by respecting the food customs of vulnerable populations; and
- ii. Develop specific MDGs strategies to enhance the realization of MDGs in post conflict countries.

### **18. Development, trade, finance, debt relief and investment**

#### **A. To the African Governments**

- i. Integrate MDGs into national policies and programs, including into PRSPs (no consensus, see below);
- ii. Strengthen and prioritize economic growth aimed at increasing well being and reduce inequality
- iii. Link economic issues to the political debate;
- iv. Democratize governance in order for civil society to access decision-making processes; and
- v. Provide fair trade agreements for African countries to export their products.

**B. To Civil Society**

- i. Review critically the role of different external actors into our political policies;
- ii. Promote partnerships between civil society and the private sector;
- iii. Develop and promote knowledge and expertise within civil society communities on commercial, finance and debt issues;
- iv. Dissociate MDGs from the PRSPs (no consensus, see above); and
- v. Prepare and train for stronger involvement in WTO decision-making processes.

**C. To the international community and financial institutions**

- i. Revise and adjust foreign investment to better meet the continent's needs;
- ii. Alleviate development aid methods with smoother conditions and more focused on development; and
- iii. Create direct credit lines for African women's development.

**19. Gender Perspectives in the MDGs**

The Millennium Declaration promotes gender equality and women empowerment as a basic human right. The Declaration also maintains that giving women their fair share is the only way to effectively combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable. Women indeed play a critical role in Africa's economic growth and development as showcased by their active participation in households and communities. Many challenges related to the gender issues must be faced. In the area of education<sup>3</sup>, almost two thirds of the world's illiterate are women. In the labor market, disparities exist between women and men in terms of opportunity, income and treatment. The majority of women are engaged in atypical unregulated work in agriculture, homes, export processing zones and the rapidly and ever growing informal economy. Deliberate steps must be taken to achieve equality between men and women within all areas of life.

**A. To the African Union and African Governments**

- i. Promote men and women equal involvement in the policy making;
- ii. Encourage and promote women contribution in the elaboration of national program and budget through stronger engagement of NGOs promoting gender equality;
- iii. Promote the informal sector and recognize and encourage the women entrepreneurship;
- iv. Promote national policies of fair and just salaries for both women and men;
- v. Implement effective legislation and programs to deal with sexual harassment at the workplace;
- vi. Promote recourse ways to protect women rights;
- vii. Sensitize women on MDGs meaning and role, especially the MDG 3 on promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women;
- viii. Promote educational and training programs to fight gender stereotypes;
- ix. Criticize negative values and models of the African societies and outlaw FGM;
- x. AU should encourage African States to ratify some regional instruments as Maputo Protocol, the one related to the African Court of Justice and the ILO Convention;

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<sup>3</sup> UNESCO estimates 2000-2004

- xi. Ratify, implement and monitor the implementation of regional and international standards on gender equity; and
- xii. Establish monitoring and follow-up mechanisms on the implementation of States commitments.

#### **B. To Civil Society**

- i. Integrate the gender issue in all programs for the achievement of the MDGs within every step, including internal management and governance;
- ii. Better involve men in sensitization actions on gender issues and women rights in the communities;
- iii. Sensitize men and women on equality in the dialogue between citizens and governments;
- iv. Establish monitoring and follow-up mechanisms to ensure the adequate implementation of States commitments.

#### **C. To the United Nations**

- i. Establish monitoring and follow-up mechanisms on the implementation of States commitments;
- ii. Respect commitments taken within international agreements and conventions related to gender issues, in allocating required resources for their effective application.

#### **D. To all UN Member States**

- iii. ILO Member States and those of the UN should ratify the key ILO Gender Conventions 100 (Equal Remuneration), 111 (Discrimination on Employment and Occupation), 156 (Workers with Family Responsibilities), 183 (Maternity Protection) and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, UN 1979).

## **20. ICT for Development**

### **Recalling**

The *UN General Assembly Resolution 56/183, 21 December 2001* which highlighted "the urgent need to harness the potential of knowledge and technology for promoting the goals of the United Nations (UN) Millennium Declaration and to find effective and innovative ways to put this potential at the service of development for all"

### **and recognizing**

- a. That ICTs have the potential to help poor communities to meet key development priorities, especially in the areas of poverty, health and education, and to play a catalytic role in accelerating economic growth;
- b. The importance of a holistic and multi-sectorial framework and partnership approach that can more effectively harness the role of development (ICT-D) both as an enabler of development as well as an enhancer of capacity development at the individual, community, organizational, systemic and societal levels;
- c. That civil society has a great potential in human resources;
- d. That Civil society, by its nature, tends to be closer than most government actors,

- to the grassroots, and the pulse of their societies; that private sector does not act in limited-resource settings; and that CSOs often having constituencies that they can mobilize at levels that government may find difficult to reach; and
- e. That the knowledge economy is a reality and therefore governments, international organizations and all stakeholders should work together to establish effective enabling environment for the implementation and sustaining of the African Knowledge Economy, at the systemic and societal levels;

the following recommendations were issued:

#### **A. To African Governments**

- i. Consider universal access to ICTs (connectivity, capacity, content and control) as a fundamental right by the international community and Governments;
- ii. Consider civil society groups as key partners by development partners and governments;
- iii. Set-up mechanisms to support civil society; and
- iv. Take into account the international development agendas particularly those focused on Africa, such as the World Summit on Information Plan of Action, the Tunis Agenda, the African regional Plan of Action in the Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE), the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and similar initiatives.

#### **B. To all**

- i. Promote partnership between all stakeholders including, Civil Society, Government, Private sector, media, international organizations, development partners and Academia in effective ICT Policy formulation, implementation and monitoring to the achievement of the MDG, particularly those related to poverty reduction, education, health, environment and gender equity.

#### **C. To Civil Society**

- i. Promote North-South-South-cooperation to ensure better visibility of best practices and experiences of emerging countries, ensure balance in North-South partnerships, and facilitate South-South exchanges;
- ii. Work with governments to better use available resources in order to improve development outcomes considering the natural and human resources of Africa;
- iii. Promote partnerships with the private sector in order to find appropriate solutions according to the specific needs of local populations.

## **21. HIV / AIDS**

It is generally agreed that in the absence of a curative HIV/AIDS vaccine, about 24 million Africans who are living with HIV/AIDS will probably die within the next few years. Currently, there are 30 vaccine candidates in the pipeline for trials in Africa but there is no guarantee that any of these vaccines will deliver protection either at pre-exposure, point of transmission or post-infection stages. Therefore, for Africa's millions who are living with HIV/AIDS, treatment with anti-retrovirals (ARVs) is the only viable option, especially since they have been proved to reduce HIV/AIDS mortality by as much as 80 percent. But despite the sharp reduction in price, especially of generics, (98 per cent since 1996), ARVs are still beyond the reach of millions who need treatment, although remarkable progress has been made in expanding access. In Africa, one in six people who needed treatment received ARVs by December 2005. Of about 10 million people, mostly Africans, who will need ARV treatment by 2010, less than 5 million will actually receive the treatment.

**A. To African Governments**

- i. Secure health financing with a continuation strategy;
- ii. Minimize HIV/AIDS-related stigma by integrating voluntary testing and counseling (VCT) into the regular health services;
- iii. Lobby for continuation of nutritious food supply for the PLWHA;
- iv. Operationalize the various commitments to fighting HIV/AIDS made by African leaders at various forums. Often this has not been done because of the clash of national priorities on a platform of scarce resources;
- v. Use APRM for HIV treatment advocacy;
- vi. Show concrete political will.

**B. To Civil Society**

- i. Intensify advocacy by stakeholders of NGOs and CSOs who are best suited to hold leaders to account. But they will be successful only to the extent that they effectively use information. CSOs should also forge crucial broad partnerships beyond their traditional allies in pursuit of a new regional agenda to offer free HIV/AIDS services to everyone who needs them, regardless of the ability to pay;
- ii. Monitor when a country is up for the APRM and push authorities and reviewers to give serious and thorough consideration to the issue of HIV/AIDS;
- iii. Prepare advocacy materials to either validate or question official position on HIV/AIDS;
- iv. Involve children as key informers on HIV/AIDS
- v. Include HIV/AIDS and prevention in all humanitarian programs and advocacy as core to reversing the negative impact

**Addis Ababa, 24 March 2007**

## **ANNEX 1**

### **DECLARATION AfCSF 2007**

We, civil society organizations coming from many countries in Africa, gathered at the African Civil Society Forum 2007 organized by CONGO and FEMNET in partnership with ECA and AU in Addis Ababa between 22 and 24 March 2007 on the theme "Democratizing governance at the regional and global level to achieve the MDGs":

- Considering our important contribution to the development of our continent;
- Aware of the unavoidable role we have to play for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and for the promotion of human rights; and
- Considering that we have to speak with one voice to become real partners in the establishment of programs and policies of regional and international institutions;

**Decide** to institutionalize the African Forum with all civil society actors, to serve as an interface between Africa and all non African international institutions and organizations;

**Ask** African Union, the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), regional economic communities, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and all other international institutions to support the holding of the African Civil Society Forum, to be organized every year.

**Urge** the Economic Social and Cultural Council of the African Union (ECOSOCC) to make use of this space to strengthen its role as consultative African institution and its necessary dialogue with all African civil society organizations.

**Invite** CONGO (Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations) to be our partner to facilitate dialogue between the Forum and regional institutions and organizations.

**Give mandate** to FEMNET to set up an ad hoc follow up committee in charge of implementing the resolutions adopted and to convene the next Forum.

Addis Ababa, 24 March 2007

## **ANNEX 2**

### **HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL MECHANISMS**

We are concerned that 27 out of the 47 members of the United Nations Human Rights Council are not demonstrating the highest standards for the protection of human rights in their countries;

We are concerned that African NGOs have been very little involved in the discussions taking place in the framework of the Human Rights Council institution building process, and in general we stress that the participation of African civil society entities, African human rights defenders and African human right activists should be promoted in the Human Rights Council;

We emphasize that human rights education in schools and in communities, circulation of relevant information and training activities on the UN human rights protection mechanisms, including the Human Rights Council, and support to civil society entities should continue to be strengthened to make these mechanisms better understood, including at the grassroots level and in rural areas;

We should also take initiatives to increase the capacity of African civil society to influence decision making processes related to human rights and to better monitor human rights situations in African countries, through the networking of human rights observatories and organizations, the empowerment of human rights activists in Africa, and the participation in human rights Forums and workshops in Africa, and outside, carried out by both universal and regional human rights organizations; We therefore encourage the participation of NGOs in the NGO Forum to the 41<sup>st</sup> ordinary session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, taking place in Accra on 12-14 May 2007. At the same time, feedback and support should be given to local NGOs to better enable them to contribute.

We stress that national human rights institutions should be in compliance with the Paris Principles to be fully independent, fully inclusive and should not serve the interests of governments; within such conditions, national human rights institutions should play a greater role at both national, regional and international levels for human rights protection and promotion;

We stress the need to build a coherent system of human rights protection between the Human Rights Council and other international mechanisms and regional human rights protection mechanisms as established in African regional institutions, including the African Commission for Human Rights and the rights of People; we also stress the need to have a coherent architecture of human rights protection within the Human Rights Council, including through strengthening the interdependence between and the complementarity of the various future mechanisms and procedures of the Human Rights Council;

We appeal African NGOs to be more involved in the work of the African Commission on Human Rights and the rights of People and in the UN Human Rights Council.

We express grave concerns about deteriorating human rights situations in several African countries, in particular in Sudan/Darfur, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Ivory Coast, as well as on new forms of human rights violations in the continent; we are therefore aware

of the need to protect women and children against trafficking, harmful traditional practices, such as excision, and human rights violations and the need to respect the international declaration for the protection of human rights defenders.

We therefore call African governments to support and work for the establishment of a responsive, result oriented mechanism through the Human Rights Council.

### **NGO participation**

The participation of NGOs should fully respect the provisions of GA Resolution 60/251, following arrangements, including ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31, and practices observed by the Commission on Human Rights;

Following and strengthening these previous practices, we stress the need to address the unbalanced representation of African NGOs through the system of ECOSOC consultative Status, which has proved to limit African civil society participation and involvement, and to enlarge the possibility for NGOs without ECOSOC consultative status to contribute to the Human Right Council, such as previously done through subsidiary organs of the Commission on Human Rights;

### **Universal Periodic Review**

The Universal Periodic Review should give the HRC the capacity to guarantee the universality of its processes when addressing human rights situations worldwide. To that end, we stress that the UPR should:

- While considering and analyzing available information, provide recommendations to the country concerned to improve its human rights critical situations.
- Ensure effective follow up mechanisms, including through UN country teams;
- Enjoy the full cooperation of all Member States;
- Provide a large space for contributions of national and international NGOs, as well as national institutions respecting the Paris Principles, into the various phases of the mechanism;
- Involve a large role for independent experts in the consideration of available information for each country to be reviewed by the UPR;
- Reach a good balance between a short periodicity and the need for quality of the UPR outputs.

### **Special Procedures**

We support the need to fully maintain the relevance and the quality of the system of Special Procedures. We regret the decision taken during the 3<sup>rd</sup> session of the Council to elaborate a code of conduct for Special Procedures. Therefore, we emphasize that:

- The existing number of special procedures should be maintained, to guarantee the scope and quality of the system, or increased to fill existing protection gaps in the human rights protection system;
- The possibility to establish country mandates should be preserved when gross systematic violations occur anywhere in the world;
- The flexibility and the capacity of urgent action of special procedures to occurring human rights violations should be maintained. Therefore, individuals and NGOs should be in a position to have access to Special Procedures even though domestic remedies have not been exhausted;
- A strong follow up should be provided to the Special Procedures' recommendations and enough financial and human resources should be guaranteed;
- Special Procedures Mandate Holders should be designated in accordance with their expertise, competence, objectivity and independence;
- We refuse that the Code of Conduct for Special Procedures limit their independence and their working capacities; at the same time, we support that the Code of Conduct should also address the question of the roles and duties of States in cooperating with

Special Procedures Mandate Holders. In any event, we call African Governments to withdraw the current draft Code of Conduct for Special Procedures as it will undermine the independence, urgency, flexibility of Mandate Holders to deal effectively with threats to human rights.

**Complaint Procedure**

We stress that the impartial, objective, victim oriented and timely nature of the HRC Complaint Procedure should be maintained. The complaint procedure should be more transparent, more accessible to the victims.

Addis Ababa, 24 March 2007

## ANNEX 3

### CSO PETITION

We, 250 leaders and representatives of different NGOs and CSOs from all over Africa attending the African Civil Society Forum 2007 (AFCSF 2007) convened by CONGO and FEMNET, in cooperation with the AU and UNECA here in Addis Ababa, on 22-24 March 2007, under the theme of "Democratizing Governance at Regional and Global Levels to Achieve the MDGs":

Reaffirming the central role of all our Governments, in full partnership with the CSOs and all stakeholders in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;

Recognizing that the fulfillment of the MDGs is underpinned by the respect of Human Rights of all citizens, the Rule of Law, in an enabling environment that is democratic, accountable and encouraging the full participation of all citizens including Civil Society Organizations, Political Parties and the private sector institutions;

Reaffirming the role and duty of Civil Society Organizations in all our countries in the struggle for the eradication of poverty, defense of human rights, promotion of justice and advocacy for peace and general human security;

Deeply concerned by the increasing deterioration of the respect for human rights and the rule of law in many countries across Africa including denials of freedom of expression, speech and association and also the growing hostile political environment for CSO activities and other civic obligations;

Hereby resolve as follows:

1. We urge all African governments to urgently work towards the creation of an enabling environment in order to benefit from the contribution of CSOs in the various efforts to achieve the MDGs;
2. Gravely concerned by the current political polarizations in Ethiopia, including the incarceration of leaders and members of opposition parties, civil society activists, journalists and other human rights defenders,
  - We urge the Government of Ethiopia to **immediately and unconditionally release** all political prisoners;
  - We also call for the immediate release of our civil society colleagues and women currently detained in various prisons in Ethiopia for political reasons;
3. Deeply concern by the current worsening of the human rights situation in Zimbabwe,
  - We find the recent assaults on leading opposition figures and the continuing detention and other violations of human rights utterly reprehensible;

- We call on the SADC and the AU to assist Zimbabwe to fully comply with the recommendations of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights and UN Special Envoy's recommendation based on their impartial fact-finding missions to Zimbabwe;
4. Alarmed at the slow progress in ending the fast deteriorating conflict in Darfur and consequent untold genocide of black populations and suffering of innocent victims, especially women and children,
    - We call on the Government of Sudan to fully cooperate with the African Union and the UN in their joint effort to protect civilians and help resolve the conflict;
  5. Gravely concerned by the renewed armed conflict in Somalia, and believing that the recent armed interventions by foreign forces set a very dangerous precedent on the continent whereby one state, in collaboration with foreign powers, can impose a military solution on another African country,
    - We call on the AU and African leaders to immediately assume their responsibility to end the invasion and actively seek the full cooperation of all Somalis in finding a lasting peaceful resolution of the conflict;
  6. In the specific cases of Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and Sudan, we urge the governments of these countries to actively explore and commit themselves to dialogue with all political stakeholders, opposition groups and Civil Society Organizations so as to bring about national reconciliation, harness the collective efforts of all their citizens towards nation-building and the realization of the MDGs;
  7. Finally, we call upon all our governments and all citizens to observe the principles of democratic governance, the rule of law and active promotion of tolerance, and those in power to stop the criminalization of political opponents and victimization of CSO leaders.

Addis Ababa, 24 March 2007

## ANNEX 4

### DECLARATION ON ZIMBABWE

#### The African Civil Society Forum 2007:

**1. TAKES NOTE** with appreciation that the African Union (AU) through the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights and the United Nations (UN) through the Special Envoy on Human Settlements Anah Tibaijuka have made fact finding missions on the situation of human rights in Zimbabwe and made adverse findings of systematic violations of human rights by the government of Zimbabwe and come up with recommendations to assist the state party of Zimbabwe to stop human rights violations and assist her to comply with her obligations in terms of international human rights standards.

#### **2. HOWEVER GRAVELY CONCERNED THAT:**

- The government of Zimbabwe continues with its path of systematic and sustained violations of human rights in particular unleashing organized violence and torture targeting human rights defenders and legitimate political opponents for silencing;
- The Zimbabwean government has failed to create a stable macro-economic environment which has resulted in untold suffering for the ordinary people of Zimbabwe and a serious humanitarian catastrophe; and
- The situation in Zimbabwe represents a significant threat to national and regional peace if not urgently addressed.

#### **3. CONSEQUENTLY THE ACSF ADOPTS THE RESOLUTION THAT:**

##### **3.1. The SADC, AU, the UN assist Zimbabwe to ensure that it fully complies with the AU Human Rights recommendations that remains outstanding in the following respects**

- 1. On National Dialogue and Reconciliation** where Zimbabwe needs to accept "mediators and reconcilers who are dedicated to promoting dialogue and better understanding" and free society from the shackles of control;
- 2. On Creating an Environment Conducive to Democracy and Human Rights** where inter-alia the government "should abide by the judgments of the Supreme [and other] Courts and repeal sections of the Access to Information Act, calculated to freeze the free expression of public opinion and The Public Order and Security Act";
- 3. Having Independent National Institutions** in terms of which the Government of Zimbabwe was urged to establish independent and credible national institutions that monitor and prevent human rights violations, corruptions and maladministration" such as an Independent Electoral Supervisory Commission;
- 4. Restoring The Independence of the Judiciary** including attending to conditions of service to protect them from political pressure; transparent and fair appointments to the bench; protection of presiding officers; complying with judicial orders;
- 5. Restoring A Professional Police Service** through non-politicization of the police service and making the police serve the Constitution and enforce the law without any fear or favor; disbanding the law and order unit which operates under political instructions and without accountability; and removing the youth militia from policing; and
- 6. Restoring a Free Media** "essential for democracy."

**3.2. The SADC, AU, the UN assist Zimbabwe to ensure that it fully complies with the recommendations of the UN Special Envoy who investigated the forced evictions (operation Murambatsvina) and observed that:**

"The unplanned and over-zealous manner in which the Operation was carried out has unleashed chaos and untold human suffering. It has created a state of emergency as tens of thousands of families and vulnerable women and children are left in the open without protection from the elements, without access to adequate water and sanitation or health care, and without food security. Such conditions are clearly life-threatening. In human settlements terms, the Operation has rendered over half a million people, previously housed in so-called substandard dwellings, either homeless or living with friends and relatives in overcrowded and health-threatening conditions. In economic terms, the Operation has destroyed and seriously disrupted the livelihoods of millions of people who were coping, however poorly, with the consequences of a prolonged economic crisis. Politically, the Operation has exacerbated an already tense and polarized climate characterized by mistrust and fear. It has resulted in a virtual breakdown in dialogue between different spheres of Government, between Government and civil society, and once again put Zimbabwe in the limelight of international scrutiny. Efficiently executed in a militaristic manner, Operation Restore Order provides clear indications that the Government of Zimbabwe has the wherewithal to implement policies at a lightning speed when it has the political will." The ACSF notes that the recommendations that are outstanding include that:

- The government of Zimbabwe embarks on a sustainable reconstruction and rehabilitation effort, and to bring to account those who have acted, or caused others to act, with impunity and outside the framework of international and national law;
- The Government of Zimbabwe to facilitate humanitarian operations within a pro-poor, gender-sensitive policy framework;
- The Government of Zimbabwe should grant full citizenship to those former migrant workers and their descendants who have no such legal status. Mostly people of Malawian, Zambian and Mozambican origin, they are among the most vulnerable and adversely affected group. This group comprises every third person found sleeping out in the open;
- The Government of Zimbabwe disregard of laws and court orders during the Fast Track land reform program set a bad precedent. The Government of Zimbabwe should set a good example and adhere to the rule of law before it can credibly ask its citizens to do the same;
- The need to restore judicial independence after a "regrettable failure of some members of the Bench to remain independent from the national and local politics of the day"; and
- The strong recommendation of the Special Envoy that the culprits who have caused this man-made disaster be brought to justice under Zimbabwean national laws. The international community would then continue to be engaged with the human rights record in Zimbabwe.

Addis Ababa, 24 March 2007

## ANNEX 5

### RESOLUTION ON ETHIOPIA

*We, the participants of the African Civil Society Forum 2007, convened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 22<sup>nd</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> March 2007,*

Recognizing that the realization and sustenance of the Millennium Development Goals presupposes respect for human rights and rule of law, creation of an enabling political environment that is built on solid democratic principles, and the commitment, mobilization and full participation of all sectors of society including civil society, political parties, and state actors,

Considering that the government of Ethiopia has ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other international human rights instruments, and that Sub-Article 9(4) of the Ethiopian constitution categorically declares that "All international agreements ratified by Ethiopia are an integral part of the law of the land"

Recalling the public pledges and guarantees made by the Government of Ethiopia to ensure that the national election of May 2005 would be free and fair,

Considering the long-time aspiration and belief of the Ethiopian people, the contesting political parties, the civil society and Ethiopia's friends and partners that a free and fair election and respect of the choice of the people will lay a firm foundation for lasting peace, political stability and national development,

Regretting that the enormous enthusiasm and deep hope aroused by the prospect of a free, fair and peaceful national election were brutally crushed by the subsequent spilling of innocent blood, the wanton destruction of property, the mass arrest of thousands of people, and the incarceration of opposition party leaders, elected parliamentarians, councilors, journalists, lawyers, teachers, and civic activists,

Believing that political differences should be resolved through dialogue, that civil society should be free to contribute to social harmony and the welfare of the poor and the marginalized, and that Government has the responsibility to uphold the law,

Recognizing the duties of all civil societies in all countries to strive for the eradication of poverty, to defend human rights, to promote justice, and to advance peace and harmony,

***Have resolved as follows:***

We urge the Government of Ethiopia to immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners, including fellow civil society activists and other human rights defenders;

We strongly recommend that the Government of Ethiopia pave the way for dialogue between all political stakeholders to bring about national reconciliation and create a wider space for all non-state actors to contribute to social harmony, stability and national development;

We call upon the UN bodies, the Conference of NGOs (CONGO) and Ethiopia's development partners to actively work towards the realization of a genuine dialogue between the Government of Ethiopia, civil society, other national political forces.

Addis Ababa, 24 March 2007