

COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Report of the Southern Africa Civil Society Consultation

Intercontinental Hotel, Lusaka, Zambia
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Prepared by

The Southern African Regional Poverty Network

Overview of Event

The Southern Africa regional consultation conference on the Commission for Africa was held in Lusaka Zambia. Participants drawn from civil society groups from Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Zambia itself attended the event. The participants were drawn from non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, faith-based organisations, representatives of youth groups, the disabled, international NGOs working in Southern Africa, researchers, academics, and those representing cultural interest groups such as sport and music. Over 160 people participated in the conference. The regional event was the culmination of a regional process which had comprised national consultation meetings (4 countries) and electronic document and ideas sharing.

Regional and continental bodies that were represented included SADC, COMESA and the African Union (including NEPAD). The Commission for Africa was represented by members of the Commission's secretariat. Officiating at the opening of the event were Mr. Foday Bojang of the African Union, Tim David, the British High Commissioner to Zambia, and Deputy Minister (of commerce, Trade and industry), Geoffrey Samukonga representing the Government of Zambia.

The conference was held over 2 days. Background papers by civil society agencies acknowledged as centres of knowledge on each of the seven themes identified by the Commission for Africa (CFA) provided a critical analysis of the issues affecting development. These overview papers together with the CFA's consultation document formed the basis of the parallel group discussions which discussed selected areas in greater depth. At the conclusion of the two day meeting the participants released a communiqué of the meeting and its deliberations.

This report summarises the deliberations and outcomes of the 2-day meeting.

Responses to the Commission for Africa

Both positive and negative responses to the CFA featured in the discussion. Positive views included that:

- The CFA and NEPAD complement each other. NEPAD focuses on what Africa can do for itself while the CFA focuses on what the international community can do to help.
- The CFA was useful for stimulating the debate on international development generally and among Africans in particular, issues and for bringing a focus on Africa, the only continent to have become poorer in the last 25 years despite its abundance of natural resources.

Negative views and scepticism about the CFA's legitimacy and delivery potential were expressed in a number of ways. For instance were concerns about:

- the real motive/agenda behind the establishment of the CFA
- in what way the CFA differed from previous initiatives which had had limited success
- the likelihood of real change resulting from the work of the CFA
- legitimacy of the process to date and after the consultation
- there were too many initiatives being started on the issue of Africa's development and that 'no more commitments' should be made until the already existing ones were met
- CFA was perceived as having failed to give proper recognition to the AU as the institution that spearheads the African development agenda. Rather than pursuing a parallel course, the CFA should have aligned itself to the programmes of the AU. Closely related to this point was that the CFA had tended to recognise and place emphasis on NEPAD rather than the AU.

Issues Relating to Africa's Development

The responsibility for Africa's development was seen as resting with both the African nations as well as the international community which had, over the years, benefited from the wealth of the African continent and its nations. The meeting noted the lack of technological resources to exploit Africa's rich natural resources as a key retarding factor to Africa's development. Processing capability and value addition were identified as key opportunities for development. At the same time, Africa's natural resource wealth was noted as being a key cause of conflicts. The role of industrialised countries in such resources-based conflicts was noted and criticised.

The MDGs were used as yardsticks to evaluate progress on the development path. The views were expressed concerning the MDGs.

- In many cases the goals are too ambitious for countries in the region. They need to reflect national circumstances and priorities to ensure ownership, which is key to successful poverty reduction.
- Countries in the region need support to develop capacity to systematically monitor progress towards the MDGs and other regional and national programmes. This is critical for policy formulation, analysis and implementation.
- Monitoring needs to take cognisance of location-specific data and that data should be disaggregated by gender and other vulnerable groups.

Culture and inclusion in human development

The meeting recognised the role of culture in development and called for governments and the international community to support initiatives (directly where possible), that would encourage the preservation of culture. The opportunities for using sport as a development tool were recognised.

The discussion on inclusion focussed on the marginalisation of certain groups (e.g. women, youth, faith based groups and the disabled) and noted the missed opportunities for development that have resulted.

Other key issues relating to human development included that:

- The need for the international community should support initiatives to address the situation of refugees. There was no reference in the CFA's consultation document to refugees and how their treatment affects broader governance processes.
- The international community should continue to support the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic but should also support initiatives to combat other diseases, like malaria, that have a serious impact in Africa.
- The effect of the 'brain drain' on development was recognised. The meeting called on G8 and other developed countries to stop actively recruiting African professionals and to begin to support initiatives to keep African professionals on the continent. Possibilities include establishing research and other institutions.
- The need to support the girl child by funding education and HIV/AIDS awareness programmes was noted.
- Water supply and sanitation are critical for achieving the MDGs and for mainstreaming gender in water resource management. The African Union's programme to support the development of the water resource sector in Africa and other water and sanitation initiatives should be supported.

Natural resources and environment

The meeting noted that the CFA consultation document did not address natural resources issues adequately. Also noted was that issues of environment were rarely incorporated into the poverty debate. It is essential to integrate poverty reduction and environmental protection as the livelihoods of many people depend on forest and veld resources and on ecosystem services.

The following required actions were noted:

- support for the development of natural resource inventories and capacity and mechanisms to monitor and manage natural resources
- support for mechanisms to monitor natural resource extraction in licences.
- the need for partnerships which develop national and local capacity for sustainable resource management.
- support for initiatives which require international business to work in a manner that is more environmentally friendly
- support initiatives for disaster risk reduction and preparedness
- Support initiatives to recognise indigenous knowledge and the contribution that it can make to development.

Financing for Development

There were divergent views on financing development. While there was general support for aid, there were some who expressed the sentiment, 'no aid, no debt'. There were mixed views on the desirability of foreign direct investment and consequently on whether governments should try to improve the investment climate for foreign investment. However, it was generally accepted that there is a need to improve conditions for domestic investment.

Aid

There was a clear message to the international community about accountability for past commitments:

- The commitment made 35 years ago to give 0.7% of GDP in overseas development aid have not been met by any of the G8 countries, including the UK. There should be no new commitment until existing commitments have been met.
- The G8 should be held to its commitments to the AU and NEPAD. The AU needs to increase its capacity to absorb resources from the G8.
- The EU needs to be held accountable for resources committed to Africa.

The key messages relating to aid and its effectiveness included following:

- Aid issues need to be integrated with the real economy.
- Funding should support the acquisition of machines and technology, research and development, entrepreneurship and the development of human resources.
- Support countries to reduce their dependence on aid.
- Donors should take into account the implications of aid, for example the impact of food aid on local agricultural markets.
- Governments should not apologise for pursuing affirmative action in granting tenders but they should publish the results of tenders to inform the public and for accountability.
- Developed countries should remove non-trade barriers immediately.
- There should be support for unconditional debt cancellation.
- Help to ensure that the focus on meeting the MDGs and on poverty reduction does not distort resource allocation. For example the focus on primary education is diverting resources from secondary and tertiary education that are necessary for development and growth.
- Support initiatives to deal with the problem of debt servicing which continues to limit the ability of countries to deal with external shocks and promote growth and development.

Growth and opportunity

The discussions focussed on the support envisaged or required from the international community. This included the following:

Investment

- Support countries to create favourable investment climates, including reducing bureaucracy and developing formal procedures for investor acceptance such as sovereign credit rating.
- Support greater focus on domestic investment and linking government and the private sector.
- Help to ensure broad based participation in economic activity including women.

Land and agriculture

- Support modernisation in African agriculture
- Support the development of capacity and programmes to speed up land reform, to eliminate gender discrimination in access to land and ensure secure tenure for women, and all associated issues.

Trade and markets

- The G8 to cease to impose reciprocity in trade liberalisation for African countries
- Support development of products that can compete in developed country markets and that have both African and country branding.
- Support elimination of subsidies in developed countries and protection of infant industries in developing countries. African countries should not be held to reciprocity on trade liberalisation.
- Trade support should not be limited to 2015. African countries need support in opposing the Singapore issues.
- The EU should avoid undermining regional integration through trade and other agreements.
- Support the development of regional bodies for phytosanitary and other testing for export compliance. This will relieve individual countries of the expense of developing this capacity.

Employment and growth

- Support coordination of government, private sector and civil society to create employment and growth. Areas include micro-credit, product branding, labour intensive production technologies, customs reform and accessing foreign markets.
- Help countries to avoid/mitigate negative impacts of relaxed labour laws in export processing zones (EPZs).
- Donor aid needs to focus on promoting growth not just poverty alleviation. Areas include out-grower schemes, local processing of agricultural and other products, and the development of infrastructure including rural roads and dams.

The G8 was also challenged to commit itself to the transformation of global institutions like the WTO.

Peace and security

Human security was noted as being of key concern in the region. The deliberations drew attention to the following:

- Support countries to implement MDG related programmes which provide a framework for addressing the human security challenges
- Effective states are needed to protect citizen's rights, however, not all strong states do this.
- Civil society has a critical role to play in safeguarding democracy and needs support to do this.
- Support the safeguarding of the rights of citizens in constitutions and the incorporation of global human rights paradigms.
- Support institutions and mechanisms for democratisation such as an independent judiciary and a national audit system to account for government expenditure
- The situations in Zimbabwe and Swaziland were noted to pose challenges to political, civil and economic rights. The international community should ensure the rights of citizens are protected.
- The visibility of the situations in small, fragile and undemocratic states needs to be increased and capacity to provide early warning of the development of conflict situations needs to be enhanced.
- Discourage the G8 from supporting undemocratic states.
- Support measure to control the traffic in small arms and to identify the connections with crime and drug smuggling.
- There is an emerging connection in Africa between democracy, peace and security and economic growth. Support the AU's standby force and peace fund to help African countries monitor and police peace.
- The meeting also observed and expressed concern over the debilitating syndrome of child soldiers.

Governance and effective states

The APRM

- EU and G8 to support strengthening of the APRM and its adoption by all AU member states. Provide technical support to simplify processes. There was disagreement over providing incentives for adoption.
- Support development of a framework for civil society participation in the APRM. Options include a shadow reporting mechanism to facilitate capacity building and timely intervention by civil society.
- Support civil society to match domestic and regional protocols on the APRM.
- Strengthen the role of the APRM in fighting corruption.

Constitutions, checks and balances

- Support initiatives to communicate the content of constitutions in plain language and indigenous languages to promote the widest possible understanding of their role.
- Support civil society to raise awareness and advocacy on constitutional issues.
- Support action to enforce compliance with constitutions by all role-players.
- Provide funding to support stronger checks and balances and accountability mechanisms.
- Support initiatives to strengthen governance institutions, election management bodies and independent monitoring bodies.

Corruption

- Enforce a code of practice for multinational companies and investigate corruption trails internationally and across Africa.
- Support anticorruption units and other government bodies dealing with corruption.
- Introduce laws in OECD countries to prevent acceptance of corrupt funds.
- Improve checks and balances on funds coming in to southern Africa and on the sourcing of funds.
- Provide support to develop civil society capacity to provide information on corruption issues.
- International community to consider routing funds for fighting corruption via civil society and not to government.
- Support initiatives for disclosure of assets by government agencies and officials.
- Support initiatives to make financial institutions accountable for accepting plundered African resources.

Regional bodies

- Encourage the development of, and interaction between parallel national and regional civil society forums that can monitor national compliance with regional guidelines and declarations.
- Support regional civil society bodies that promote and facilitate regional integration.

Participation

- Civil society needs support to engage in more civic education and to involve communities in governance and policy development and monitoring processes.
- Support the development of a code of ethics for civil society organisations to ensure their credibility in dealing with issues of democratisation and governance.
- The CFA should address the consultation document's failure to highlight participation from a gender or youth perspective.
- Support the creation of an SADC youth assembly.
- Support the development of more effective and open policy setting processes that take account of the needs of local people and business.