

Communique of the Southern African regional civil society consultation on the Commission for Africa

Convened by the Southern African Regional Poverty Network.
Johannesburg, South Africa
14 and 15 June 2005.

1. With the 2005 G8 meeting imminent, the Southern African Regional Poverty Network (SARPN) convened a regional civil society consultation to discuss the contents and recommendations of the Commission for Africa report. The workshop was attended by 65 representatives drawn from civil society, faith-based and academic institutions. They came from ten SADC countries, namely Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
2. The participants were conscious of a unique opportunity, as the last civil society consultation before the G8 meeting, to discuss the CFA report and its recommendations. We were assured that our deliberations and comments would be conveyed to the G8, through the CFA Secretariat and the British High Commissioner-designate, Mr Paul Boateng. A senior representative of the African Union, Ambassador Susan Sikaneta, also highlighted the AU's interest in the outcomes of the consultation.
3. Participants spent two days reflecting on the major thrusts of the CFA report, namely governance; peace and security; financial flows, trade debt and aid; natural resources; growth and poverty reduction, culture and inclusion and human development and gender. Our reflections were informed by presentations from representatives of the CFA Secretariat, the United Kingdom government, the African Union, regional civil society and by academics.
4. Groups were tasked with: (1) assessing the positive and negative implications of the recommendations for southern Africa; (2) highlighting the role of civil society in influencing, shaping and monitoring the implementation of the report's recommendations; and (3) addressing the CFA's recommendations and formulating responses targeted at all stakeholders, including African governments, the CFA, donor nations and civil society.
5. Participants expressed the need for the development of comprehensive strategies to enhance the monitoring component of the CFA and G8 outcomes, which should help meet MDG goals, through an active partnership and collaboration between donor countries, African governments, civil society, the private sector and trade unions across the region.

6. Participants expressed the following major points of concern which need to be considered in pursuing a partnership approach to the outcomes of the Commission for Africa and the G8 meeting:

- For a global response to eradicating corruption, rather than viewing it as a specifically African problem as participants believed the CFA report did;
- For donor countries to acknowledge and capacitate existing African structures and processes around governance and peace and security issues rather than creating new, donor-led instruments which could undermine African instruments;
- For donor countries to move quickly on their commitment to the 0.7% target for ODA as agreed at previous international conferences;
- For 100% debt relief for African countries to be implemented speedily and in an unconditional manner;
- For the need to build an African entrepreneurial class capable of taking full advantage of market access opportunities that are emerging;
- For African governments, the African private sector and international donors to pursue sustainable, pro-poor growth strategies that best manage the various consequences of globalisation and neo-liberalism on Africa's development;
- For aid, trade relations and debt relief to be seen as a comprehensive package for facilitating enhanced inter-African trade, poverty reduction and economic development in Africa;
- For the empowerment of civil society participation in the implementation and monitoring of the CFA and G8 outcomes in ways which build on the historical strength and experience of CSOs and CBOs in engaging and understanding community needs across the region;
- For civil society to mobilise around the CFA report and to use it as an advocacy tool in realising community needs and in informing policy debates of the key issues impacting on and hindering African development;
- For indigenous knowledge systems to be respected by donors and African governments as a resource in realising and affirming the value of African cultures;
- For the inclusion of the rural poor, despite an often illiterate status, in human development and governance processes in southern Africa and in Africa;
- For donors and African governments to recognise and incorporate faith-based institutions as active participants in the resolution of conflicts in different settings in southern Africa, and Africa more widely.

7. Participants urged that forthcoming international summits support African aspirations for economic growth and poverty reduction across the continent. Besides the G8 meeting, the Millennium Review Summit and the subsequent

WTO Ministerial meeting would be key moments to further these aspirations.

8. The presentations and a full workshop report will soon be available on the SARPN website (www.sarpn.org.za). It should be used as a valuable resource for advocacy of a partnership for development between donor countries, African governments and civil society in Southern Africa.