



**Southern Africa Civil Society
Regional Consultation
on the Commission for Africa**

Summary Report

**Prepared by The
Southern African Regional Poverty Network**

**14th – 15th June 2005
Johannesburg, South Africa**

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1. *Overview of Event*

SARPN hosted the Southern African Civil Society Regional Consultation in Johannesburg on 14th - 15th June 2005. Approximately 65 representatives from civil society in South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, Mauritius and Zambia were in attendance. This Consultation was the follow up from the pre-Report Consultation which was hosted by SARPN in Lusaka in December 2004.

This two-day Consultation provided a platform for civil society to critically analyse the Commission for Africa (CFA) Report *"Our Common Interest"*. Experts were drawn from non-governmental organizations, faith-based and academic institutions across the region. The participants were divided into expert groups based on the sectors identified within the chapters of the Report. For the purpose of this consultation there were six groups:

- Governance
- Peace & Security
- Financial Flows: Trade, Debt & Aid
- Natural Resources, Growth & Poverty Reduction
- Culture & Inclusion
- Human Development & Gender.

Each of these groups was given the task of going through the relevant sections of the Report and assessing the positive and negative implications of the recommendations. Groups were asked to highlight where they saw the role of civil society within the context of the Report and the future of the CFA in general. They were further requested to address the CFA's recommendations and to formulate responses targeted at all stakeholders, including African governments, the CFA, donor nations and civil society. These responses would be communicated to the CFA and actors in the region for consideration alongside the Report.

Opening the Consultation, the African Union (AU) Executive Secretary for Southern Africa, Ambassador Susan Sikaneta, gave a statement on behalf of the AU. She presented a strong front in support of the Report, stating that "Africa is laying claim to the 21st century" and that "the international community is equally rising to the challenge of helping to remove poverty, ignorance and disease from the face of Africa and restore Africa's dignity."

The CFA was represented by members of the Secretariat who gave a comprehensive overview of the Report and acted as resource people for the expert groups. Closing the two day event, the British High Commissioner designate Paul Boateng spoke about the UK government's position on the Report. He reiterated the good intentions of the British government and Prime Minister Tony Blair in this initiative and the plans to take the recommendations from both the Report and the post-Report consultations to the international community and specifically to the donor nations.

The Johannesburg Consultation marked the last of five regional consultations ahead of the G8 Summit to be held in Scotland in July 2005.

2. *Emerging Themes*

As a whole, the groups concluded that the CFA and any follow-up initiatives resulting from it, must:

- Affirm support of the already existing continental and regional mechanisms for promoting the development of Africa (for example, the AU and NEPAD)
- Allow for aid and debt-cancellation to be free from conditionalities and for spending priorities to be set within Africa and by African actors
- Take a lead role in advocating for international government commitments to the development of the African region
- Assist in the development of a programme of action for the implementation of the Report's recommendations
- In collaboration with civil society, repackage and embark on a media campaign to popularise the Report and motivate stakeholders for decisive action.

Moreover, the consensus was that civil society is empowered to:

- Take responsibility and place pressure on stakeholders to commit to initiatives
- Create alliances with civil society in the North to engage and hold accountable their governments in fulfilling the CFA recommendations
- Reflect upon its own capacity within the context of the recommendations and define its role in the process
- Assist in the creation of indicators and criteria for monitoring progress and development
- Monitor the implementation of and adherence to the recommendations of the CFA.

3. *Responses to the Report*

Governance

Enforcement, censure and sanction were key elements in the discussion on governance. The meeting felt that there was a need to make clear provisions for enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with the principles of democratic governance. The meeting also noted that the Report was not couched within the context of the conventions developed over the last 15 years. The group was also disillusioned by the recommendation on corruption in the Report, which was weakly treated corruption as merely an African problem. Further, the group noted the need for any implementation mechanism to acknowledge the existing structures before creating new structures or standards. The group was encouraged by the space made within the Report for the role of civil society.

The key points determined in the deliberations were:

- The Report went far in redefining the relationship between the north and the south in a very positive light and enabled African delivery and

ownership of the process, which resulted in a balancing of responsibilities between stakeholders

- Civil society should see the report as a tool for engagement with governments and take the message forward
- The Report lacks focus on social movements and their strength on the continent to bring about change
- When discussions begin on implementation, the concept of “do no harm” should be central, and stakeholders must examine what the G8 should refrain from doing as well as what support it can provide.
- The report did not make space for the evaluation and assessment of progress in the implementation of its recommendations. There was need for such a space to be established.

Peace & Security

Members of the group expressed varying opinions about the Report. They noted that peace and security was not the focus - rather, the focus was development in the classical sense, for which peace and security is a pre-requisite. The view was that the CFA merely intended to provide the landscape of the state of peace and security on the continent.

The group felt that the Report was easy to challenge as being too brief or omitting significant points relating to peace and security. Specifically, the group noted how the Report was weak in offering how its initiatives would directly feed into the existing peace and security architecture. It was felt that only adequate resources are lacking to achieve substantial progress in respect of peace and security, given the existence of NEPAD, SIPO, ECOWAS and IGAD, to name a few.

Specifically, the group noted that:

- The proviso connected with the 50% financing of the Peace Fund must be removed, as it provides donor nations with a “way out”
- Continental and regional mechanisms and not donor nations must be permitted to prioritize peace and security issues to be addressed (for instance, by using the APRM)
- The G8 countries must harmonize and coordinate on their individual national policies related to Africa, so as not to undermine efforts being made at peace and security on the ground
- The CFA must take care that its initiatives like the Arms Trade Treaty do not detract from ongoing instruments aimed at the same outcomes
- Peacekeeping must be considered and supported in the broadest sense of peace building
- Non-state actors ought to be brought into the early warning function.

The group endorsed the establishment of a permanent expert panel on sanctions under UN control, and gave its support to the UN High level panel recommendation of a UN Peace building Commission.

Financial Flows, Trade Aid & Debt

The basic premise for the discussion was that of effective aid and the need for mutual accountability on the side of both donor nations and receiving government. In this context the group felt a mechanism existed in the form of NEPAD and that this should be supported in the framework of the Report. There was concern about

the varying degrees of commitment found in the international community on the issues of both debt cancellation and aid provision. A consensus on these issues was taken as a strong point within the Report. In the area of trade, the group commented on the tensions that existed between the north and Africa with regards to supply-side constraints. Further, it was noted that preferential treatment given to certain states was not being effectively utilized, in most cases due to a lack of capacity.

Recommendations that come from the deliberations included the need:

- To develop the trade capacity of the region and within this the capacity to negotiate trade agreements
- To keep in mind the different trade and development requirements of countries in Africa and the danger of seeing Africa as a homogenous bloc.

It was highlighted that civil society should use the Report as a tool for engaging both local and international governments in their trade and aid policies.

Finally, one concern raised was that the Report, although recognizing the radical criticism of the current development paradigm by civil society, fails to make concrete recommendations to change this paradigm.

Natural Resources, Growth & Poverty Reduction

In general, the group felt that the Report emphasized the importance of resource management and provision of basic services with the aim of poverty reduction and growth. It was determined that poverty reduction was a key element to include when looking at natural resources, as often these issues can contradict one another; examples of this included the creation of protected areas and the modernization of agriculture. The perspective offered was that all aspects of the recommendations needed to examine both the individual and the collective viewpoints to ensure effective growth and resource management. The group encouraged the implementers of the recommendations to look at existing programmes for models of best practices to ensure effective benefit sharing.

The group focused on selected issues in their recommendations and these included the role of civil society, African government and donor nations:

- The need for security of tenure of land and the avoidance of social injustice as a result of both individual and collective titling, rather than the formalisation of land rights through individual tenure
- A need for a strong recommendation on integrated water resource management
- The role the state might play in providing incentives, protocols and regulatory controls in order to develop a private sector that recognises its social commitments and responsibilities
- African institutions, including civil society, must be part of the process of developing criteria for disbursing resources following the CFA
- Disbursement needs to take account of not only the income at country level but also the distribution of income to ensure the inclusion of the poor
- Budgetary support should be linked to the existence of a nationally owned plan for using aid and transparent mechanisms are called for to ensure adequate monitoring of budgetary expenditure.

Culture & Inclusion

The group applauded the CFA's placement of culture at the centre of the debate on development. However, it concluded that there was a need for greater efforts to understand the values, norms and allegiances of the cultures of Africa, and that the Report must speak to African experiences. The role of religious networks was recognised as important in filling the gaps in service delivery by states.

The question of culture and inclusion was said to be not only a task for Africans but for Europeans and Americans as well. The group noted that the developed world must reflect upon its own attitudes and institutions vis-à-vis Africa. A concern expressed was that the language used in the Report was indicative of a western perspective and that, therefore, the Report demonstrated a western bias.

The consensus was that the Report did not examine culture in an in-depth manner, and that it ought to:

- Focus on strengthening an indigenous knowledge system
- Support culture as an inherent component of development
- Consider how the African identity was shaped by its history and how Africans are navigating the tensions between individual and collective notions of their identity
- Provide for social and traditional institutions in the policy process
- Respond to the reality of Africans living in abject poverty
- Provide financial indicators directed at developing and supporting culture
- Entrust African institutions with processes driven towards culture
- Prevent distortion of cultural norms and values through the setting of parameters by external influences.

One concrete recommendation was the creation of a cultural fund.

Human Development & Gender

Recognising the lifespan of the CFA and the nature and content of the Report, the group felt that the CFA could realistically be expected to advocate for the challenges in Africa to remain on the agenda of donor nations and promote the Report as a tool for civil society. It was said that with this comes the ability to begin the process of mobilising resources for the implementation of the recommendations. The group acknowledged that the Report reflected a change in the nature of the relationship between donor nations and Africa, while introducing a mechanism for economic growth. The group was encouraged by the level of financial resources allocated to human development through education and health, which would effectively address the issue of poverty and stagnation.

Recognised practical steps for civil society and the CFA included:

- Popularising the Report through various mediums and advocating for decisive action on the recommendations
- A focus by civil society on coordinating with organisations in the north to hold governments accountable for the fulfillment of their undertakings (following their endorsement of the Report)
- Recognising the significance of corporate governance as a cross-cutting theme, which is not restricted to trade - for example, transparent and

accountable corporate governance is essential to responses to HIV/AIDS and, in particular, to issues of access to antiretroviral medication

- Developing a plan for the implementation of the recommendations by all stakeholders.