

SADC-CNGO

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COMMUNIQUE OF THE SADC CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ON "DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION", KHOTSONG LODGE, THABA BOSIU, LESOTHO

14-16 August 2006

1.0. PREAMBLE

SADC Civil Society Organisations held a Civil Society Forum at Khotsong Lodge, Thaba Bosiu in Lesotho between 14 & 16 August 2006, ahead of the SADC Heads of State and Government Summit in Maseru, Lesotho. The 2006 SADC Civil Society Forum:

ENCOURAGED that in terms of article 23 of the SADC Treaty, Member States commit themselves to involve fully, the people of the Region and non-governmental organisations in the process of governance, regional integration and to co-operate with, and support the initiatives of the peoples of the Region and non-governmental organisations, contributing to the objectives of the SADC Treaty in the areas of co-operation in order to foster closer relations among the communities, associations and people of the Region;

INSPIRED BY the SADC Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) adopted in 2003 and the Strategic Indicative Plan of the Organ (SIPO) agreed upon in 2004 both of which form the hallmark of the governance and regional integration framework in the region;

NOTING that both the RISDP and SIPO recognise the centrality of civil society organisations in the achievement of SADC benchmarks on governance and regional integration; and

Adopts the following Communiqué.

2.0. On Civil Society-SADC Relations

The 2006 SADC Civil Society Forum notes that while the SADC Treaty as well as the RISDP and SIPO commit relevant SADC structures to involve civil society in the region in their deliberations and processes, civil society remains excluded and marginalised from key SADC processes. This trend runs against the spirit and commitment contained in SADC Treaty in Chapter Seven, Article 23 that commits SADC to working in partnership with regional civil society. Additionally, this commitment is reinforced by the Memorandum of Understanding entered into with SADC Council of NGOs. We therefore call upon the SADC Heads of State and Governments to:

- 2.1. Ensure effective and active participation of civil society in its deliberations and processes;
- 2.2. Dissemination distribute information on SADC processes including its programmes such as the RISDP and SIPO to communities;
- 2.3. Promote consultation and active interface with civil society during pre-summit activities, the Summit itself and post-Summit activities;
- 2.4. Guarantee effective and active participation of Civil Society organisations in the SADC National Committees (SNCs);
- 2.5. Ensure participation in the SADC programmes, in particular the RISDP, SIPO and various related projects; and
- 2.6. Support and Strengthen SADC implementing structures to be result-oriented, particularly un meeting the agreed target for RISDP and SIPO

3.0. On Democracy, Peace and Security

The SADC Civil Society Forum recognises that the majority of SADC Member States have undergone transitions from authoritarian rule to multiparty democratic systems since the early 1990s. The Forum notes that challenges for nurturing and consolidating democracy still confront many countries leading to periodic legitimacy crisis of governance which in turn results in political instability. The SADC Civil Society Forum observes that while the SADC region has not experienced major inter-state wars since the collapse of the Cold War and demise of apartheid in South Africa, intra-state conflicts and instability still persist, thereby posing a serious threat to peace and security.

The Forum is concerned that many SADC countries tend to prioritise state security over human security yet human insecurity poses a major challenge for peace in the region today. Human insecurity is exacerbated by economic inequality, endemic health crisis, unabated poverty and hunger etc.

The Forum further notes that the SADC region is still vulnerable to violent intra-state conflicts affecting civilian populations. There is also a continued proliferation of small arms and light weapons circulating throughout the region. These weapons are often used in fuelling violent criminal activities. The regional security architecture in SADC still remains nascent and challenges for conflict prevention, conflict management and conflict transformation are daunting. The Forum notes that escalation of intra-state conflicts generates political instability and compromises security. In many SADC countries violent conflicts tend to intensify around elections with adverse effects for democracy, peace and security.

The Forum, therefore, implores SADC Heads of State and Government to:

- 3.1. Put in place mechanisms for constructive management of conflicts;
- 3.2. Establish the SADC Standby Brigade as a regional element of the AU Standby Force (ASF);
- 3.3. Domesticating international laws, continental and regional democracy and election norms, standards and principles;
- 3.4. Uphold and implement the agreed international, continental and regional democracy and election norms, standards and principles;
- 3.5. Inculcate a culture of peace, democracy and human rights among citizens especially the youth;
- 3.6. Pursue human security in tandem with state security;
- 3.7. Implement SIPO in close partnership with civil society organisations;
- 3.8. Elevate the status of the SADC Principles and Guidelines to a protocol;
- 3.9. Strengthen the SADC Secretariat and give it more power to implement and enforce Summit decisions; and
- 3.10. Elevate the status of the SADC Parliamentary Forum into a regional parliament with requisite powers to hold the SADC Summit accountable.

4.0. On Regional Economic Integration

The SADC Civil Forum notes that SADC Heads of State or Government have committed themselves to deepen regional integration through, among others, harmonisation and convergence of policies across all fronts. The Forum further notes that in order to strive towards deep integration SADC Heads of State and Government have adopted the RISDP which aims at (a) accelerating poverty reduction; (b) promoting economic growth and social development; (c) achieving macroeconomic stability, harmonisation and

convergence of policies; and (d) achieving regional economic and security community. The Forum observes that SADC has committed itself to achieving free trade by 2008; customs union by 2010 and common market by 2015 through measurable and time-bound targets;

The Forum implores the SADC Heads of State and Government to:

- 4.1. Accelerate implementation of the RISDP in order to promote socio-economic advancement;
- 4.2. Monitor and evaluate implementation of RISDP annually;
- 4.3. Facilitate the free movement of goods and persons across borders within the SADC region;
- 4.4. Promote and encourage more intra-regional trade;
- 4.5. Strive towards development and retention of requisite human resources for socio-economic development;
- 4.6. Reduce unequal and uneven development among SADC member States;
- 4.7. Inculcate political will for implementation of SADC Protocols signed by member states;
- 4.8. Increase participation of Civil Society Organisations in SADC National Committees; and
- 4.9. Rationalise multiple regional economic communities in the region.

5.0. On Gender Equality

The SADC Civil Society Forum notes with gratification that SADC Member States have signed the 1997 SADC Declaration on Gender and Development in Blantyre, Malawi and the 2003 AU gender parity protocol in Maputo, Mozambique both of which commit them to gender equality;

However, despite signing of these declarations, there is little progress made by a majority of Member States towards achieving just 30% of women's representation in key organs of government, let alone achieving 50% of women's representation;

The SADC Civil Society Forum, therefore, calls upon the SADC Heads of State and Government to:

- 5.1. Elevate the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development into a Protocol for Accelerating Gender Equality in order to give it more legal teeth;
- 5.2. Domesticating the Gender and Development Declaration within national laws;
- 5.3. Accelerate the achievement of the 50% women in decision making by 2015;
- 5.4. Ensure that women occupy decision-making positions; and

- 5.5. Encourage Member States to stamp out gender-based violence.

6.0. On HIV/AIDS

While the SADC Civil Society Forum welcomes adoption of the Maseru Declaration on HIV/AIDS, the Forum is concerned, the HIV/AIDS epidemic is on the increase and taking its toll on populations of the region especially on women and girls;

The Forum calls upon the SADC Heads of State and Government to:

- 6.1. Accelerate the implementation of the Maseru Declaration;
- 6.2. Fulfill their commitment to contributing to the HIV/AIDS Regional Fund in terms of the agreement in Maseru;
- 6.3. Elevate the Maseru Declaration on HIV/AIDS into a Protocol;
- 6.4. Enhance the sub-region's health capacity by implementing the May 2006 African Common Position on HIV/AIDS, Malaria and TB; and
- 6.5. Prioritize universal access to treatment and provision of adequate nutrition.

7.0. On Human Rights and Access to Justice

The SADC Civil Society Forum recognizes the centrality of human rights and access to justice to democratic governance. The fundamental embodiment of human rights is the respect for human dignity as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Human rights and democracy are fulfilled when individuals know their rights, know where to access them; know when they are violated and know how to seek redress for violations. Democracy promotes and protects human rights through constitutional guarantees, rule of law and institutional oversight mechanisms that protect human rights from abuse. The Forum observes that the respect, protection and promotion of human rights and access to justice in SADC countries constitute one of the many challenges facing the region. The Forum, therefore, urges the SADC Heads of State and Government to:

- 7.1. Domesticating international, continental and sub-regional human rights instruments into national laws in order to ensure their legal enforcement;

- 7.2. Promote, respect and protect freedom of expression; freedom of association; access to information and freedom of the press. In this regard, we note a worrying trend in Zimbabwe on existing legislation restricting these freedoms;
- 7.3. Provide for and enforce mechanisms aimed at ensuring access to justice, particularly for marginalized and vulnerable social groups such as women, youth, people with disabilities and people living with HIV/AIDS;
- 7.4. Mainstream human rights, peace and democracy within the educational curriculum from lower level to higher level;
- 7.5. Promote civic education, in collaboration with civil society organizations to empower citizens around human rights and access to justice;
- 7.6. Respect the independence of the judiciary and the strengthen the informal courts;
- 7.7. Strengthen the justice delivery system retain lawyers and accredit paralegal agencies;
- 7.8. Agree on mechanisms and framework for the implementation of policies and legislation concerning people with disabilities taking into consideration international conventions on people with disabilities; and
- 7.9. Embark on legal reform aimed at removing laws/legislation that discriminate against marginalized social groups such as women, youth, people with disabilities and people living with HIV/ADS;

The SADC Civil Society Forum commits itself to collaborate with relevant SADC Structures and actively participate in the realization of the above resolutions.

Done at Khotsong Lodge, Thaba Bosiu, Lesotho, 16th Day of August 2006