

THE CIVIL SOCIETY DECLARATION

June 26-27, 2004

AFRICAN UNION MEETING

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

We, members of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), from across Africa and the Diaspora attending the 3rd AU Civil Society Forum held during June 26-27, 2004 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia hereby:

Commend and support, in principle, the AU Chairperson and the AU Commission's vision, mission, and strategic plan in the steady process toward full institutionalization of the AU. Further, we commend the leadership of this African led and African defined effort as the requisite steps to full integration, African unity, peace, and development;

Encourage the AU's decisions as reflected in the preamble of the AU Constitutive Act, Article 3(a), (g) (h) (k), and Article 22 to engage CSOs in the development, strengthening, and operationalization of the AU at all levels;

Reaffirm the commitment of CSOs in Africa and in the Diaspora to actively work with the AU as full fledged partners for the realization of the objectives, and principles of the AU;

During this consultation, we deliberated upon the draft vision, mission and, strategic plan of the AU, and also received progress reports on:

- The Pan-African Parliament (PAP), its roles, and responsibilities;
- NEPAD and its integration into the overall AU process;
- The establishment of the Peace and Security Council;

- Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC); and
- Social Affairs Department.

The sessions were characterized by frank and open deliberations. We identified several appropriate roles and made recommendations for CSOs in Africa and in the Diaspora. Those roles include a resolve to:

- Engage emerging institutions of the AU and RECS;
- Build a wider coalition and constituency in support of the AU programs and initiatives; and
- Undertake to interface with the AU's vision, mission, and strategic plan, as and when appropriate.

It is our collective wisdom that the strategic mission and vision offer opportunities for deepening and widening of civil society engagement with the AU and its constitutive bodies.

However, we believe this engagement will be most fruitful, and proactive and thereby foster the necessary sense of ownership and complementarity in the future if, and when, the civil society forum is conceived and organized by its members working with relevant AU bodies.

To facilitate the deepening and widening of civil society engagement we call for the immediate approval and launching of the ECOSOCC, and a sector-wide engagement by CSOs with the Commission;

We recognize that the vision, the mission, and strategic plan will be meaningless if the AU and its constitutive bodies do not receive the requisite human and material resources from African governments, the people of Africa, at home, and in the Diaspora.

We also recognize the unique challenges facing Civil Society in the effort to engage the AU and its constitutive bodies. These challenges include, but by no means limited to, issues of mutual accountability, transparency, and internal democratic governance;

We encourage creative and inclusive means of addressing the various challenges.

The success of the AU can only be achieved through the full dedication of the AU, its constitutive bodies, CSOs, African people at home, and in the Diaspora, and friends of Africa internationally.

Done in Addis Ababa June 27, 2004