

COMMUNIQUE OF THE SADC CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM AND THE MEETINGS HELD IN LUSAKA, ZAMBIA

14th – 16th August 2007

Preamble

We the Civil Society Organizations, meeting at the SADC Civil Society forum in Lusaka, Zambia from 14th to 16th August 2007, during the SADC Heads of State or Government Summit in Lusaka, Zambia:

Encouraged that in terms of article 23 of the SADC Treaty, Member States commit themselves to involve fully, the people of the region and Civil Society Organisations in the process of governance, regional integration and to co-operate with, and support the initiatives of the peoples of the region and Civil Society 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 positive developments aimed at adopting the SADC Gender Protocol and the operationalisation of the African Court on Human & People's Rights as well as the ongoing processes of regional integration;

Noting the political efforts initiated by the SADC Heads of State or Government to mediate in areas of conflict in the region and in promoting good governance and democracy;

Recognizing the central role that Civil Society Organisations continue to play in the development and governance process in the SADC Region.

Concerned that civil society still remains excluded from the SADC structures and processes in spite of the commitments to involve civil society as articulated by the SADC treaty as well as the RISDP, SIPO and the MOU between the SADC-CNGO and SADC.

In the light of the above, we, the SADC Civil Society Forum, **call upon the SADC Heads of State and Governments to:**

1. Institute immediate measures to transform and create concrete interface among all the SADC structures in order to allow effective participation of civil society;
2. Speed up the process of domestication and implementation of the various regional protocols and declarations aimed at promoting women's rights, press freedoms, access to information and regional integration, among others. Put in place their implementation, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms;
3. Undertake progressive dialogue between civil society and governments in advancing the development agenda of the region;

4. Take immediate measures to institutionalize civil society involvement in key decision making processes aimed at national and regional development.
5. SADC Secretariat and member states ensure effective participate of civil society in the upcoming “SADC Poverty & Development Conference”, and as a review of existing poverty eradication initiatives.

WITH REGARDS TO:

1.0 Implementation and enforcement of SADC declarations and protocols

- 1.1 There is little effort or commitment by SADC member states towards the domestication of regional declarations and protocols. (e,g gender protocol, food security)
- 1.2 The non-adherence to the protocols and declarations by some member states, which in many instances results in internal conflicts and instability, with the consequences of slowing down or reversing the agenda towards regional integration initiatives.(e.g SADC elections guidelines)
- 1.3 The mediation efforts by SADC Heads of State or Governments in emerging and existing conflict areas continues to be marginal and falls short of addressing the core issues, leading to prolonged suffering of communities and the deterioration of economic, social and political fabric of the society; as can currently be observed in Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Malawi, DRC and Swaziland.
- 1.4 SADC continues to be an overly heads of state political entity at the exclusion of an open and participatory process.

We Call Upon SADC Heads of States to;

- **To adopt and develop concrete national and regional implementation strategies for the protocol on gender and development and other strategic declarations enhancing development of the region.**
- **To provide concrete mechanisms of checks and balances amongst themselves as peers in order to ensure accountability and enforcement of the protocols agreed upon.**
- **Take concrete and urgent action to resolve the current breakdown in the rule of law and violation of fundamental freedoms in Zimbabwe and Lesotho.**

2.0 Operating environment for civil society in SADC

The political and policy space for civil society engagement in SADC remains limited, uneven or non-existent. The efforts being taken by regional civil society to participate

and engage with regional integration initiatives are not being reciprocated by some SADC member states and the regional body,

There is a worrying trend by some member states in SADC to institute statutory regulation aimed at stifling the work of NGOs, and in some instances, criminalizing their existence and operations;

We Call Upon Heads of States to:

- **Refrain from putting in place restrictive civil society legislation that will constrain the operating environment for civil society**
- **Adopt the guidelines and principles for the legal and operating environment for NGOs in SADC currently being finalized by civil society;**
- **Put in place legislation that promotes and enables civil society participation and existence rather than restrict and hinder them. We specifically call upon the Zambian and Zimbabwean governments to withdraw NGO Bills currently under consideration, but held in abeyance; but instead guarantee the involvement of civil society in any processes that seek to put in place regulatory and legislative frameworks.**
- **Guarantee the effective participation of civil society at the SADC national and regional committees.**
- **Take immediate measures to institutionalize civil society involvement in key decision making processes.**

Poverty and Development in SADC

We continue to appreciate the SADC Heads of States or Government commitment to meaningful regional integration. The forum notes that in order to strive towards meaningful integration, SADC Heads of States or Governments have adopted the RISDP which aims at a) accelerating poverty reduction; b) promoting economic growth and social development; c) achieving macroeconomic stability, harmonization and convergence of policies; and d) achieving regional economic and security community.

The SADC region is experiencing the negative effects of trade liberalization on the key economic drivers in the region such as small farming, small trading and also the job loses. The consequences of the trade liberalization has already forced other member states to lose customs revenues, thus, affecting governments capacities to provide essential public social services and investing in and maintaining national infrastructures.

Further, the splitting up of SADC into two groups negotiating EPAs with the EU is not only weakening them now but is also placing at risk the future development cooperation and integration of the whole of SADC.

We regret that in spite of the adoption of the Maseru Declaration on HIV/AIDS to date our governments in the region are failing to effectively deal with the challenges of HIV/AIDS, poverty and democratic governance.

We further note the SADC efforts towards organizing the multi-stakeholders Poverty and Development Conference to be held in Mauritius

We Call Upon the Heads of State or Government to:

- **Accelerate the implementation of the RISDP in order to promote social and economic advancement.**
- **Reunite and deal together with the EU demands in order to protect and promote the interests of our all-round development, as SADC is not merely a 'trade' region.**
- **Resolve internal differences within the SADC region and advance decisively with SADC development cooperation and integration.**
- **Do not allow EU 'development aid' promises to lure SADC governments into far-reaching and irreversible commitment that can place the entire future of SADC in jeopardy.**
- **Put in place mechanisms that will provide a united regional front for more effective negotiations (e.g under EPAs)**
- **Rationalize multiple regional economic communities**
- **Accelerate strategies geared towards the implementation of the Maseru declaration on HIV/AIDS**
- **Guarantee effective civil society involvement in the upcoming poverty and development conference in Mauritius 2008.**

Civil Society Forum Commitments

In conclusion the 3rd Civil Society forum would like to emphasis its commitment and intentions to align and harmonise civil society actions towards achieving both national and regional governance and development objectives. Further civil society commits itself to the following;

- **Constructive engagement in national, regional and international development initiatives and with other regional bodies such as the African Union, the Commonwealth, and others.**
- **Enhancing efficient, effective, transparent and accountable practices as evidenced by the ongoing process of developing guidelines and principles for the legal and operating environment for Civil Society in SADC.**