

AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY POSITION

Of the African NGO Forum

15th to 16th October 2001, Nairobi, Kenya

TO THE AFRICAN MINISTERIAL PREPCOM IN PREPARATION FOR THE WSSD, JOHANNESBURG, SEPTEMBER 2002

Preamble

We, the representatives of African civil society, assembled in Nairobi, Kenya on 15th to 16th October 2001 to review progress and constraints in the implementation of the declarations and commitments that came out of the Earth Summit in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. Representatives from East Africa, Central Africa, Southern Africa, Small Island States of the Indian Ocean, West Africa and North Africa regions adopted the following statement:

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) takes place at a time of serious environmental, political, social, and economic crisis for Africa, and indeed for the world in general.

We note with concern that the Draft Ministerial Statement is incomplete in many respects and does not address some key issues such as the special developmental needs of Small Islands States and the problems in Somalia. This is a grave omission, and the African Common Position needs to address these issues as a matter of priority.

Furthermore, we need a paradigm shift from macro-economic stabilisation to models of development that take into consideration human development, employment-creation and social protection.

The forces of globalization that have shaped the world and our continent in the last decades have deepened and entrenched poverty, marginalised peoples and nations, and accelerated ecological disintegration. This globalisation process has entrenched unequal power relationships between the north and south and has undermined the sovereignty of African nations.

Women, children, youth and other socially marginalised groups are the ones who suffer most!

(This declaration must be read in conjunction with the attached discussion report of the above-mentioned meeting.)

PRIORITY OBSTACLES:

1. Poor governance, e.g. lack of democratic governments, human rights abuses and corruption, lack of prioritisation of country needs
2. Foreign debt
3. Poverty, food insecurity and unemployment

4. HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases
5. Unequal trade terms
6. Inter and intra state conflicts and wars, and the refugee problems emanating from oppressive and corrupt regimes, inter alia
7. Environmental degradation, exploitation of Africa's natural resources and (toxic) waste disposal
8. Lack of political will to implement international and regional agreements
9. Mining exploration and exploitation (e.g. inequitable distribution of mineral wealth and lack of mining policies)
10. Gender inequalities
11. Lack of people-centered development

THE AFRICA CIVIL SOCIETY COMMON POSITION

For African governments:

1. Ensure that Africa's debt is immediately cancelled.
2. Eradicate corruption in all levels of government
3. Poverty eradication must be a priority for all governments
4. Open up discussions on New Africa Initiative (NAI) immediately by involving civil society and other major groups
5. HIV/AIDS should be declared as an occupational hazard.

Allocate a percentage of government income to manage HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases (yellow fever) immediately.

Also create mechanisms for access to anti HIV/AIDS medication
6. Strengthen and consolidate multi-lateral financial mechanisms to assist African governments and Civil Society for sustainable development.
7. Ensure equitable distribution of resources (national and international)
8. Mobilise to resolve all conflict on the continent and mobilise for democratic governments, such as in Somalia

9. Create and enhance mechanisms for greater involvement of young people in all aspects of sustainable development, and as instrumental in promoting peace in areas of civil strife.
10. Processes and programmes to clean up and care for the environment should involve civil society at all levels.

National and local Commission for Sustainable Development (CSDs) must be initiated in all countries.
11. Ratify and implement the BioSafety Protocol and lobby strongly for the ratification and implementation of other agreements, such as the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), Kyoto Protocol, and International Labour Organisation conventions in particular
12. Invest more resources to civil society, and to involve them in all phases and levels of initiatives and developments
13. Recognise legitimate civil society organisations, as important partners in sustainable development

As Civil Society, we commit to:

1. Work with government as partners in sustainable development

2. Strengthen civil society through networking and information sharing
3. Forming partnerships with other role players in sustainable development
4. Promote professionalism amongst all Civil Society
5. Better co-ordinate Civil Society involvement
6. Promote cross-pollination of diverse Civil Society organisations

***The delegates of the WSSD NGO Forum, 15-16 October 2001, Nairobi,
Kenya***