

# SADC-CSO CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON AU-ECOSOCC



**27 - 28 April 2006**  
**Cresta Lodge, Harare**

## **A REPORT**

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African Forum and Network  
on Debt and Development

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP

ON AU-ECOSOCC

27 - 28 April, 2006

A REPORT

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# About AFRODAD

## **AFRODAD Vision**

AFRODAD aspires for an equitable and sustainable development process leading to a prosperous Africa.

## **AFRODAD Mission**

To secure policies that will redress the African debt crisis based on a human rights value system.

AFRODAD Objectives include the following:

- 1 To enhance efficient and effective management and use of resources by African governments;
- 2 To secure a paradigm shift in the international socio-economic and political world order to a development process that addresses the needs and aspirations of the majority of the people in the world.
- 3 To facilitate dialogue between civil society and governments on issues related to Debt and development in Africa and elsewhere.

From the vision and the mission statements and from our objectives, it is clear that the Debt crisis, apart from being a political, economic and structural issue, has an intrinsic link to human rights. This forms the guiding philosophy for our work on Debt and the need to have African external debts cancelled to enable poverty eradication and attainment of social and economic justice. Furthermore, the principle of equity must of necessity apply and in this regard, responsibility of creditors and debtors in the debt crisis should be acknowledged and assumed by the parties. When this is not done, it is a reflection of failure of governance mechanisms at the global level to protect the interests of the weaker nations.

AFRODAD aspires for an African and global society that is just (equal access to and fair distribution of resources), respects human rights and promotes popular participation as a fundamental right of citizens (Arusha Declaration of 1980). In this light, African society should have the space in the global development arena to generate its own solutions, uphold good values that ensure that its development process is owned and driven by its people and not dominated by markets/ profits and international financial institutions.

## List of Acronyms

AFRODAD	African Forum & Network on Debt and Development
AU	African Union
CS	Civil Society
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ECOSSOC	Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
OAU	Organisation of African Union
SARPN	Southern African Poverty Network

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# Day One

## Session 1, Introductions, Registration and Opening Session

### 1. Background to ECOSOC

Under a two year mandate (2005-2007), AFRODAD represents the Southern African CSOs in the African Union's (AU) Economic, Social and Cultural Council. Since 2005 AFRODAD has actively provided, Secretariat and coordination roles and remains instrumental in taking ECOSOCC to the region. One of the key assignments during its tenure is to facilitate the establishment of ECOSOCC national chapters throughout the region. A key player in the establishment of these chapters will be the national NGO umbrella bodies who, because of their strategic positions and roles, will play a crucial role in the formation of these chapters. It is against this background that AFRODAD hosted a regional ECOSOCC Strategic Planning meeting on 27 - 28 April 2006 in Harare, Zimbabwe.

## 2. Introduction

Mr. Charles Mutasa, the Executive Director of AFRODAD welcomed the participants to Harare and to the meeting and then gave a very brief synopsis of the formation of ECOSOCC. Although the AU-CSO processes begun well before, the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, at their meeting in Lusaka in July 2001, strongly emphasised the need for wider civil society participation in the policymaking process and structures of the AU. This finally gave birth to ECOSOCC and paved a clearer way and platform for NGOs, social and economic groupings, professional associations and civil society to interact and be integrated in the AU business. Under the AU framework, namely Article 22 of the Consultative Act of the Union, ECOSOCC plays an important advisory role. The organ is perceived as a structured vehicle for civil society participation in AU processes. Mr. Mutasa noted that meaningful participation has the potential to generate civil society ownership of sustainable development on the continent. ECOSOCC has been welcomed by both governments and civil society, but it must be noted that real commitment at government level varies from country to country. Mr. Mutasa also noted that there is a strong realisation that the success of ECOSOCC depends on many stakeholders. This is a challenge to CSOs as there is need for closer examination of the modalities for partnership with various (political) leaders. CSOs need to look at ECOSOCC and contribute ideas on how to make the initiative more acceptable amongst its constituencies, mobilise support in respective countries and retain 'untainted' autonomy whilst being effective within and outside the AU structures and processes.

After this brief background, the participants were asked to introduce themselves and highlight what they expected to get out of the meeting. The following is a clustered envelope of the participants' expectations:

1. The need to demystify ECOSOCC and foster a better understanding of the initiative in terms of its mandate, vision, activities, focus, structuring, opportunities and allowing for ordinary people to participate in its activities.
2. How to translate the space provided through ECOSOCC into an effective platform for the voices of the African people.
3. An examination of potential synergies through networking and collaboration with other CSOs.
4. The discussions during the consultative process would be open and robust and bring to the fore the numerous challenges facing Africa, as well as explore possible effective strategies for tackling the identified challenges to development.
5. Formulation of strategies for ECOSOCC to have the capacity for mobilising CSOs to bring African governments to accountability.
6. Participants will exhibit a clear commitment to ECOSOCC's mandate in terms of their different CSOs and countries.
7. Formulation of clear structures and processes for the establishment of national chapters, resourcing and indicative operational strategies.
8. Experience sharing on governance, and the interaction between governments and CSOs on the continent.
9. To get a clearer picture on how AFRODAD would build on the outputs of the meeting and take the ECOSOCC process forward.

## 3. Presentation 1

### 3.1 Briefing on ECOSOCC and basis for SADC CSO Engagement with the EOSOCC

**Mr. Charles Mutasa; Deputy Presiding Officer and Interim Southern Africa Bureau Representative**

Building further on the initial introduction to ECOSOCC, the presentation highlighted the AU rationale and mechanisms for engagement with civil society.

ECOSSOC is an advisory organ of the African Union (AU) which was launched during an historic event in Addis Ababa on 29 March 2005. It consists of a cross section of stakeholders including civil society organisations from the AU member countries, NGOs, social and community based groups, workers, traditional and religious groups. Essentially ECOSOCC is headed by a Bureau of five regional representatives, a Standing Committee and a General Assembly of 150 members. The Bureau is headed by Professor Wangari Mathai as Presiding Officer and also the East African regional representative. Other members of the Bureau/Deputy Presiding officers are Professor Maurice Tadadjeu (Central Africa), Dr. Ayo Aderinwale (West Africa), Professor Fatima Karadja (North Africa) and Mr. Charles Mutasa (Southern Africa).

Realising that civil society is an integral part of decision and policymaking on the continent, ECOSOCC was established under the provisions of Article 22 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union. It is a space or opportunity for civil society organisations across Africa to interact and input into the work of the AU organs and to influence policy and decision making on issues pertaining to the development of the continent. ECOSOCC is thus hailed as a positive step and democratic space in which the voices of the African people through various sectoral/thematic representation can be recognised and kept alive in the matters concerning their future.

Under the OAU, interaction with civil society was very limited, the "interaction" framework did not give room for direct CSO participation. It was largely uncoordinated with CSOs obtaining no more than observer status in OAU meetings. It must however be noted that discussions/efforts to recognise and include CSOs as an active participant in issues pertaining to the continent's development go as far back as 1990 as highlighted by the Arusha Declaration on Popular Participation. However initially little materialised from these efforts due to the varying nature of CSO-government relations at various national levels. In 1997, Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, the then Secretary General of the OAU reiterated the CSO-OAU collaboration by recommending the effective collaboration between the Union and CSOs to the Council of Ministers. The Secretary General's recommendations led to the beginning of a process which eventually led to the establishment of ECOSOCC.

Following these recommendations, two crucial OAU-CSO conferences were held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The first was held on 11-15th June, 2001 and the second exactly a year later. These crucial meetings led to the birth of a provisional working group of 20 CSO representatives. The issue of representation was a contentious issue due to the concerns around coverage, this prompted many debates. A membership tag of 600 was initially suggested, but this was discarded on the basis that it was not feasible mainly due to resource constraints and the calibre of representation. The current proposal is to have 150 members consisting of 106 country representative (with 2 representatives per country), 24 Transnational CSOs and 20 Diaspora CSOs. With such space available it is now up to CSOs to strengthen themselves and collaborate in order to participate effectively in the ECOSOCC processes. Civil society also has space to participate in the Pan African Parliament and The Specialised Technical Committee.

The structures of ECOSOCC consist of a General Assembly, a steering committee and Sectoral Cluster Committees representing the 10 clusters - Peace and Security, Political Affairs, Infrastructure and Energy, Social Affairs, Human Resources, Science and Technology, Trade and Industry, Rural Economy and Agriculture, Economic Affairs, Women and gender related issues and Cross cutting programmes.

To date a number of documents focusing on key areas have been developed and adopted to guide the course of ECOSOCC work at various levels including the Code of Ethics and Conduct for Civil Society, Statutes, Interim Rules of Procedure and Modalities and a Strategic Plan of Action. It must be noted that these documents were a result of strong consultations amongst various stakeholders. Also noted was the emphasis by the AU that ECOSOCC would only be fully operational once Chapters of the initiative were established in all member countries. Articles 2, 4, 7, 8 and 11 of the Statutes (Appendix 3) provide a clear basis for the establishment of, membership in and operational modalities of ECOSOCC.

Mr. Mutasa summed up the presentation by challenging the participants to acquaint themselves as individuals and civil society body corporates with the Statutes and Interim Rules of Procedure and Modalities for the establishment of ECOSOCC.

## 4. Presentation 2

### 4.1 ECOSOCC of the AU - Status Report

Elizabeth Githinji, Programme Officer, Office of the Presiding Officer, AU, Kenya

The Report asserts that "ECOSOCC is the vehicle for building a strong partnership between governments and all segments of African civil society". The presentation provided a brief background to the establishment of ECOSOCC, its mandate, progress made to date, challenges both confronted. ECOSOCC and its National Chapters are expected to replicate these clusters, namely:

- Peace and Security
- Political Affairs
- Infrastructure and Energy
- Social Affairs and Health
- Human Resources, Science and Technology
- Trade and Industry
- Rural Economy and Agriculture
- Economic Affairs
- Women and Gender
- Cross-cutting programmes

The Report notes that the first meeting of the Interim Standing Committee of ECOSOCC had formulated a strategic plan of action in order to facilitate effective and smooth operation of the Interim structure in the next 2 years (2005 - 2007). The strategic plan also encompassed an operational budget of US\$3.784.800 to facilitate the ECOSOCC process. From the budget, each country was allocated US\$20.000 to spearhead the formation of the National Chapters. The 2006 ECOSOCC budget is US\$1 million and the major share of that budget is allocated for meetings of national and regional stakeholders, consultative meetings and various committees of ECOSOCC's functioning organs. Regional representatives can obtain these resources through submitting a proposal to the ECOSOCC office in order for them to carry out various activities. A number of challenges, chief amongst them being resources constraints which have an impact on ECOSOCC activities are noted in the Report. There are, however, various opportunities to raise resources for the effective implementation and functioning of ECOSOCC. The Diaspora, for example, offers fertile ground for resource mobilisation, while the spirit of volunteerism in Africa needs to be enhanced and directed at priority areas for development. The speaker also noted that Prof. Wangari continues to do a sterling job in fundraising efforts taking advantage of her Nobel Prize status.

#### Discussant

The discussant, Mr. Carlos Fumo, of the Foundation for Community Development in Mozambique noted that ECOSOCC is a real space for CSOs to interact with both the national governments and the AU that must be taken advantage of to prevent other forces filling the vacuum. In doing so, however, CSOs face some challenges, especially around claiming and maximizing space. The tendency among CSOs has been to compete rather than complement governments, thus undermining the use of available spaces. It is critical that CSOs find ways of maximizing this space so as not to lose it. Collaboration among CSOs themselves has also been another challenge which unless addressed, might challenge the CSO occupation of this space.

On their side African governments are showing a lot of political will to make change but there is need to move away from good political intentions to real change and action. Mr. Fumo also noted that there is need for concrete and clear mechanisms for engaging and benefiting from ECOSOCC and it is CSOs' responsibility to ensure that these processes become meaningful to the ordinary people.

The resource gap has been a challenge to ECOSOCC processes and more needs to be done at various levels to mobilize resources and ensure that the plans are implementable and realistic. In Mozambique, although ECOSOCC has not been launched yet, various awareness-raising and consultative processes are already on-going. Mr. Fumo also discussed the crucial need to harmonize ECOSOCC processes to what is already ongoing on the ground.

## **Plenary**

Several participants raised concerns around inconsistencies and errors in the ECOSOCC documents especially around the ethics code, rules and the structure of formation. They also questioned the values that informed the formation of ECOSOCC. After a long discussion there was a general consensus that ECOSOCC was a good space and that for the sake of progress and to utilize the space, these documents should be used for the time being but ways to improve them should be sought. It would be a real let down if civil society concentrated on the negatives and not utilize the space.

# 5. Session 2: NGO Participation in ECOSOCC

## Presentation 3

### 5.1 SADC-Regional Organizations - Knowledge, Involvement & Expectations of ECOSOCC

Mrs Barbra Kalima-Phiri, SARPN

Mrs. Kalima-Phiri noted that given the early stages of the processes, there were a lot of assumptions which may or may not be true about the ECOSOCC/CSO engagement such as:

- Development cannot be achieved by one institution; it can only be achieved through collective action. ECOSOCC is one such collective approach to the continent's development and should be optimally used. In order for this to be achieved, there is need for engagement with Civil Society in conditions radically different from those that prevailed at the formation of the OAU.
- The other assumption is that ECOSOCC structures will ensure active Civil Society participation in its policy-making processes, eventually contributing to the African Union's vision, mission and strategic plans.
- The ECOSOCC platform will provide CSOs with direct input into the AU's policy-making processes and a framework for participation in processes of evaluation and monitoring - moving away from a mere exchange of ideas with CSOs to active engagement in the AU.
- The AU can strike a partnership with CSOs - who they view as key players in enhancing social, political and economic development in Africa. The presentation also raised the following as key challenges for NGOs in their search for effective strategies for engaging within the AU structures and processes:
- ECOSOCC encourages CSO-government partnerships but does not necessarily address the weak partnerships that might exist among them.
- The dynamics of CSO relationships amongst themselves affects/impacts on ECOSOCC. These diverging positions sometimes do not necessarily reflect the national realities but can be rooted and driven by external agendas, which tends to create disharmony amongst CSOs themselves.
- Mrs. Kalima-Phiri also noted that there are new emerging CSO types and the challenge is to ensure that their voices filter into ECOSOCC, because although currently unrecognised under ECOSOCC, they are making positive contributions to the continent. These emerging organisations also present a challenge to the definition of CSOs which participants generally agreed needed to be broadened as the dynamics are changing. Some organisations while admittedly doing good work, are not recognised under the current definition.
- There is need to answer the fundamental question: To what extent can ECOSOCC in its current form and in view of current state of CSOs truly reflect and mainstream these complexities?
- **Article 3 - 6 of the Statutes**

The Article emphasis on criteria, rules, eligibility, membership and other issues - has very limited clarity on the rights of CSOs in terms of the extent to which their views or active participation would translate into well binding decisions of the AU.

- **Limited awareness about ECOSOCC among different regional organisations**

Limited knowledge and appreciation of ECOSOCC has seriously, and will continue to affect CSOs' engagement with the AU. Awareness raising and information dissemination especially at national levels remains very weak. Currently, there is no active website specifically focussing on these issues. Coordination of information is still quite weak, despite the existence of a Bureau. Thus most of the information remains with the AU and the Bureau. CSO operations prone to high levels of interference

Article 6.6 dictates sources of funding for CSOs, that is, that 50% must come from members and CSOs should reveal their sources of funding. However, and in reality, the majority of regional NGOs are not necessarily membership organisations but loose networks that are united by a common ideology and/or position and have no obligation to give money. Thus, a number of regional organisations are technically excluded from ECOSOCC. The demand for revealing of funding sources is nothing but an extension of repressive home-country government demands for the same.

- **Limited Sectoral Committee representataion**

The number of representatives from each quarter, specified under Article 12 specifies the number of representatives. However, the quotas are inadequate, taking into account the diversity of civil society.

This is not only an issue of numbers but also sectoral coverage. For example, there is limited representataion around issues of vulnerability, aged, disabled, HIV and Aids. These are important, highly intertwined complex issues that cannot be dealt with by just one CSO represented at the Standing Committee level

**Discussant: Dr. Bheki Moyo**

In response to Mrs Kalima-Phiri's presentation, Dr. Moyo noted that there were different ways of dealing with any issues. On one hand, there is an option to pick up complaints and negatives and bemoan them or alternatively pick up the positive and run with it. While there are concerns on several issues around ECOSOCC, he felt that at this point wise to take the space and run with it and seek to strengthen it as we go. Any delay will further harm the development of the continent.

On the issue of the definition of CSOs, Dr. Moyo questioned which types of CSOs ECOSOCC defines. Is it CSOs in Africa or African CSOs? He noted that Article 6, while including CSOs in Africa, deliberately excludes African CSOs which are critical in various development processes. He also noted that another dilemma with CSOs is that while they should play a complimentary role to the state, they are currently playing an alternative role thus undermining their impact.

He also noted that:

- At the moment there are no expectations from the African people from ECOSOCC because they do not know about it. There is an urgent need to popularise it if the true African voice is to be reflected.
- The issues of representation in ECOSOCC are problematic; there is a need to review membership and representativity.
- For ECOSOCC to move on there is need to strengthen the national chapters and umbrella bodies for more effectiveness.

**Plenary**

The most prominent issues centred on the definition and types of CSOs and registration of NGOs in various countries. The current AU definition is rather narrow and leaves out a lot of deserving NGOs, including briefcase NGOs, who may sometimes be problematic should not be brushed aside as some of them are doing really good work.

The participants also noted the challenge that ECOSOCC only recognises registered CSOs while it is a reality that in most countries several credible NGOs remain unregistered. Due to the various political scenarios across the region, and because of their nature of work, the registration of NGOs is problematic due to strict government regulations and efforts to minimise and undermine the work of NGOs in Zimbabwe, for example. It does not, therefore, follow that unregistered NGOs do not perform credible work. There was a consensus that ECOSOCC needs to review and recognise the problems of NGO registration as a real challenge.

**Table 1: Challenges and Recommendations for Effective CSO-Government Engagement**

<i>Challenge</i>	<i>Recommendation</i>
<b>Information and knowledge management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make information readily available and easily accessible even to the people that do not have access to internet.</li> <li>• Timely availability of and updates on progress regarding key on issues on development initiatives, reports and declarations etc to CSOs. This will lead to effective engagement/participation of CSOs, better understanding of AU operations, intentions and plans – less misunderstandings.</li> </ul>
<b>Broadening notions of CSOs/NGOs (NGOs not entirely a reflection of CSOs)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for a wider focus which also includes key traditional CSOs like trade unions, churches, student groups etc</li> </ul>
<b>Strength of ECOSSOC mandate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ECOSSOC to broaden its mandate from not just being an <u>advisory</u> organ but also provide for decision making - where these can be adopted well binding and can be enforceable</li> </ul>
<b>Antagonistic Government-CSO Relations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen CSO–government relations through ECOSSOC.</li> <li>• Re-orientation of how CSOs can work closely with governments without necessarily being antagonistic, and whilst allowing for transparent engagement between the two parties.</li> </ul>

## 6. Session 3

### Presentation 4

#### 6.1 A Critical Analysis of the CSO Engagement with the AU (Agenda and Strategies)

Eve Odete; Oxfam GB, Nairobi

The presenter focussed on the various platforms and mechanisms through which CSOs can engage the AU. Noting that there was in fact room to engage more critically with the AU, Ms. Odette emphasised that it was the role of civil society and citizens in general to ensure accountability and governance and the effective use of this and other democratic spaces. The ECOSOCC space was, however, undermined by the limited opportunities there are for CSOs to lobby the Heads of State Assembly, for example, during the AU summits as most of the work and lobbying is done prior to the meeting. Civil society needed to be more pro-active and find other ways of enhancing the engagement and lobbying. As an example, she suggested lobbying through the Addis Ababa based Ambassadors. It is impossible to influence HOS Summit at/during the Summit as the processes start long before. CSOs therefore need to be proactive in identifying spaces and opportunities preceding the summits which they can effectively use to ensure they lobby the HOS.

Ms Odette took the meeting through the various platforms for engaging the AU, including the Assembly of Heads of State, Executive Council, Permanent Representative Committee, AU Commission, Peace and Security Council, PAP and the African Court on Human and People's rights.

Clear as these engagement platforms may seem, there are some serious challenges that CSOs have to deal with. As an example, she cited last year's HOS Summit in Libya and the recent Khartoum Summits where civil society was largely denied access to the Summits due to strict visa and other bureaucratic limitations. Ms. Odette also noted the following concerns:

- Host states unilaterally lower standards for access to the Summit
- Poor accreditation and budget transparency around CSO participation.
- Sometimes CSOs in the hosting countries are weak and therefore unable to facilitate other CSOs' participation in the Summit. The active role played by civil society during the 2004 HOS Summit in Mozambique was hailed as it facilitated CSO parallel meetings and collaborated with the Foreign Ministry resulting in some of the CSO recommendations being incorporated into the HOS document.
- Alternative sources of financing have not been explored.
- ECOSOCC is unable to act decisively to protect CSO space.
- There is a lack of availability of information in a timely manner.

The above weaknesses point to the need to examine new ways of working with the AU, governments and civil society. Some of the implications cited include:

- Common African positions should be defined, not as the position of African states but as the position of states and peoples.
- There is need to be less instrumental and be more inclusive - that is by looking beyond the bureaucracies.
- There is still need to democratise information and resources.
- ECOSOCC must seriously explore other avenues for public feedback.
- Challenge of replacing language of roles and stakeholders with rights, responsibilities and obligations.
- For CSOs to be heard, they have to increase efforts to claim the space - thus take advantage of ECOSOCC as it provides such a platform.
- Three (3) key values of inclusion, solidarity and autonomy, must be ingrained into the engagement space. Table 2 summarises recommended actions to bring the values into fruition.

**Table 2: Values and Recommended Policy Actions for Effective CSO-AU Interface**

<i>Values</i>	<i>Policy Actions required</i>
Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AU and NEPAD should include guarantees that civil society representatives and non-state actors will have access to establish side-events alongside the formal agenda of Summits and key conferences.</li> <li>• NEPAD should open up spaces within the formal meetings for civil society to speak directly to various fora including the African Partnership Forum and Summits.</li> <li>• Annual calendar of events should be shared in advance</li> <li>• CSO participation should look towards widening the space and/or rotating involvement in a manner that consolidates a culture and experience of working continentally</li> </ul>
<b>Solidarity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expectations should be clarified in order to identify those that are shared and those that are distinct to either party. These should then be negotiated as agreements.</li> <li>• NEPAD and AU Budgets and Plans should be accessible either through arrangements with CSOs or simply placed on the website</li> </ul>
<b>Autonomy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEPAD and CSOs should facilitate regular pre-consultations of civil society prior to important decision-making fora, but managed by the latter.</li> <li>• CSOs should organise themselves to ensure that they have the capacity to deliver on the agreements it makes with NEPAD.</li> </ul>

In summing up her presentation, Ms. Odette also noted that the first AU Strategic Plan is coming to an end in 2007 and therefore it is critical to take stock of what has gone on and how to move forward. Some of the opportunities for this kind of reflection will be availed at the World Social Forum in Nairobi in 2007 and the eve of the 200 years of the abolition of slavery.

### **Plenary**

Ms. Primrose Matambanadzo, the discussant raised on the need for civil society to clearly define their agenda, strategies and timing of their engagements which have mostly been proactive rather than reactive. The plenary discussions interrogated the challenges around what civil society should be doing to participate more in ECOSOCC and the quality of debates with the different committees. It is important for CSOs to influence at the level of national participation and debates, the issues at national levels to influence upcoming summits. The levels of debates in clusters determines the extent of influence in the AU, therefore it is important to ensure that these are of high quality. Civil society needs to always be ahead of the AU Commission in articulating issues.

## 7. Presentation 4

### 7.1 Linking SADC NGOs with the AU (Agenda and Strategies)

Mr Abi Dittlake, SADC NGO Forum (Executive Director)

The report argued that there was a paralysis between the philosophy and practice with regards to the formation of ECOSOC. The principal basis of the AU crafting ECOSOCC is one of 'willing to involve but very suspicious of civil society'. The presenter highlighted the complexities of engaging within the SADC structures and processes. Building mutual trust between CSOs and governments remains a thorny issue in the framework of engagement between the two parties. Furthermore, there are 'internal' challenges of legitimacy of CSOs' representation as 'briefcase' and individualised NGOs without any collective mandates continue to occupy the NGO space.

Mr. Dittlake noted that a visible feature of SADC regional progress over the past decade is the movement towards democratisation and political commitment towards people-centred development and transparent political management of countries and economies. There still exists, however, some serious challenges in consolidating this political transition and social change. Some countries and leaders are lagging behind in this regard, and most of the policies, programmes, actions and attitudes are at variance with both continental and regional principles and protocols. The region also continues to be characterised by a multiplicity of regional integration initiatives with a significant overlap in the membership of regional organisations such as COMESA, EAC, ECCAS, OIC and SACU.

Ideally, the SADC structure/framework represents a strategic intention to deepen and consolidate regional economic and political integration by member states. The success of such intention and commitment is dependent on the availability and capacity of both regional and national institutions to manage and implement them and the political will. SADC has committed itself to involving civil society in its processes and this was articulated in a number of the organ's declarations. In particular the Strategic Objectives as contained in Article 5 of the 1980 Treaty and the Strategic Priorities as reflected by the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan. These are premised on the urgency and determination to reduce levels of poverty through an elaborate action-oriented plan. Central to the success of this plan is the commitment to involve CSOs at national and regional levels - informed by true partnerships and consensus seeking. The SADC member states have committed themselves to create an enabling environment for the full participation of NGOs and broader non-state actors at national level. However, progressive this may seem, it has become clearer that member states are at various levels of development and implementation of such commitments, despite the fact that a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with the SADC Council of NGOs.

The speaker noted that the situation has to a large extent, been prompted by the tensions existing between governments and civil society. Governments believe that they are democratically elected and therefore legitimately represent the people, whereas civil society faces a legitimacy crisis as they are unelected. Governments, therefore, distrust civil society and therefore, tend to undermine their participation and efforts while at the same time presenting an appearance of inclusion especially in instances where the participation of civil society is a condition for development aid. The mutual suspicion and distrust had led to disengagement in several instances and the definition of CSO-state relations as either pro or anti-state or anti-transformation/reactionary. The result of this is the autonomous and parallel development, which militates against the emergence of a national/regional/continental project to meet the needs of the people. To sum it all up, Mr. Dittlake emphasised that the SADC institutions are effectively closed to real and effective partnerships with civil society. Regional integration remains a Heads of State project. He also noted that, while the SADC is ideally a building block to the AU, in reality there seems to be a rather illusive relationship between SADC/AU. Because it is very opaque, the SADC is apparently more difficult to influence than the AU.

As a way forward, Mr. Dittlake suggested the need to rethink and develop new ideas, strategies and approaches towards an alternative development framework and culture and some of the following could be considered:

- It is important to "connect the points" - i.e. strive to close the gap between CSOs and national governments for the future and benefit of the region and citizens.
- Spearhead an orientation towards a "rules-based" regional governance principles approach - striving for enforcement mechanisms of the protocols and commitments adopted by our leaders.
- Need to re-conceptualise our engagement strategies and develop appropriate tools of analysis that will enable us to develop an understanding of the real nature of our challenges.

## **Discussant: Mrs Judith Kaulemu**

Building on the previous discussions and the presentation, Mrs. Kaulemu noted the following:

- There is need for better CSO understanding of the political dynamics within the AU and decision-making structures within the SADC.
- There are some divergences between the SADC and the AU. There is no relationship between the two and yet both represent the upholding of principles of integration - the scenario has to change.
- It is important to note that civil society organisations are already implementing the programmes implied under the clusters/ sectors, therefore there is need to find complementarities on what is already on the ground rather than reinventing the wheel.
- Influencing HOS will not happen during the Summits.
- There is need for closer integration, networking and collaboration amongst CSOs as this will also cater for such challenges as the current reactivity rather than proactivity.

## 8. Day Two

### 8.1 Session IV: Building Synergies and structures for ECOSOCC Engagement

#### 8.1.2 Recap of Previous Day

The rapporteur, gave a recap of day one discussions:

#### 8.2 Focus of the meeting:

- " Review progress made to date
- " Explore avenues for the establishment of national chapters

#### 8.2.1 Issues Arising:

##### Points of Consensus

1. ECOSOC is "the people's Parliament in which civil society can influence AU policy issues and processes". The structure presents an opportune platform for CSOs to interact with AU and have an impact in terms of the priorities for and direction of development.
2. "Nature hates a vacuum" hence CSOs need to occupy and effectively utilise the space provided without compromising their identity, legitimacy and impact.
3. The space provided, through ECOSOC, is an outcome of a number of initiatives and not a donation from the AU.
4. CSOs need to take aboard the voices of the ordinary people, be strategic in the timing and mechanisms of engaging the AU.
5. The key issue is representation and not the numbers (not the size of contingents to AU meetings). Hence, the size and composition should be viewed for what they are, that is, just structuring mechanisms of ECOSOC - within and outside the structures, CSOs need to formulate effective processes for engagement and impact.

##### Divergent Perspectives

Divergent views hinged on the following aspects:

1. Ownership and accountability of ECOSOCC - Owned and accountable to AU or civil society?
2. Criteria for participation of CSOs: What are the acceptable minimums for qualification? The issues of accountability of the Credentials Committee was found to be a thorny but topical issue that needs to be followed up and dealt with as a matter of urgency.
3. Draft Statutes state-centric or not? To whose benefit are these statutes, and should they be adopted and operationalised in their current state?
4. Weight of ECOSOCC within the AU structures: There was prolonged debate on the relevance and weight of ECOSOC as an advisory organ and questions on the actual locationing of the organ within the AU organogram.
5. Is there going to be a built-in review mechanism within the ECOSOC mechanisms and if so, what was the most appropriate time for the review?
6. Funding issues - deliberations centred on the need, or lack of it, for NGOs to reveal their sources of funding.

#### 8.3 Practice and Lessons

1. Mozambique has formed its National Chapter and is attempting to create participatory processes in three regions. However, their initiatives have been constrained by lack of resources.
2. Issue of self reliance needs follow up and harmonising with criteria for qualification as certain minimums are needed. For example 53% of NGOs are not registered and as such should not be direct participants of the ECOSOCC initiative.
3. Umbrella bodies do not, or seldom, represent all NGOs in their countries as membership is voluntary.
4. Although statutes exist for the registration of NGOs, most of them are not registered for a number of reasons. In Zimbabwe, registration is a cumbersome political process - It takes up to 5 years to register and those NGOs seen as 'oppositional' are denied registration.

The shadow of the possible 'NGO Act' is a threat to NGOs in Zimbabwe, hence a 'wait and see' attitude of many CSOs that have chosen not to register.

## **8.4 Questions and Challenges**

### **8.4.1 Challenges**

- Building an alliance with national umbrella bodies
- Resourcing: Structures, processes, legitimacy and autonomy
- How to be visible as ECOSOCC and information dissemination
- Membership issues need further interrogation
- How to concretise and make ECOSOCC more effective
- Poor accreditation and budget transparency around CSO participation. For example, how to deal with host states that unilaterally lower standards for access to AU summits

### **8.4.2 Questions**

- Are CSOs really welcome by governments: Lots of willingness shown by governments; but suspicions and mistrust remain on both sides
- What values informed the structuring of ECOSOCC (and its processes?)
- Is ECOSOCC a top-down initiative?? How does civil society fit?
- Will ECOSOCC promote participation or simply rubber stamp governments' ideals?
- Will ECOSOCC meet key expectations of civil society, e.g. being responsive, representative?
- What strategies are necessary for working with 'building blocks' as ECOSOCC?
- What is the extent and are the implications of government buy-ins into the ECOSOCC initiative?

## **9. Formation of Steering Mechanism for National Chapter Formation**

### **9.1 Steering Committee Mandate and Size**

The meeting deliberated and agreed on the following to guide the formation of the Steering Committee:

- National Chapters should be set up by October 2006.
- SRSC will be a transient organ.
- Location of the SRSC: AFRODAD
- Tenure: March 2007. Review and determine need of SRSC to or not of continuity by end of the term.
- Resources for Steering Committee - AFRODAD to request resources from the Office of the Presiding Officer (AU), communicate and channel these to the SRSC and the National Chapters.

### **9.2 Steering Committee Terms of Reference**

1. Work in conjunction with AFRODAD and national umbrella bodies in the setting up of National Chapters
2. Help with resource mobilisation
3. Monitor the credentials committee
4. Formulate a regional action plan
5. Work in liaison with the Presiding Officer
6. Collate and circulate proposed changes to the Statutes and procedures
7. Facilitate networking between and among ECOSOCC chapters, and other regional blocs

8. Develop a regional action plan (including a budget)
9. Define principles, values, vision and mission of ECOSOCC

### 9.3 Accountability of the SRSC

- Accountable to the Southern African Assembly of the Interim ECOSOCC
- Report to the Deputy Presiding Officer who will in turn report to the Presiding Officer.

### 9.4 Voting: Criteria, Procedure and Outcome

#### 9.4.1 Criteria

- Ability/capacity/aptitude to assist (Knowledge of ECOSOCC process)
- Gender balance and spatial coverage
- Commitment
- People with clout/profile to articulate ECOSOCC business

#### 9.4.2 Process of Election

- Show of hands for the nomination and voting.

#### 9.4.3 Election Outcome

The following were duly nominated and elected as the Southern African ECOSOCC Committee. They will work together with AFRODAD to establish National Chapters and the selection of the two national representatives into the ECOSOCC regional structure.

**Table 4: Election Outcome**

Name	Gender	Organisation and Country
Carlos Fumo	M	Foundation for Community Development, Mozambique
Brenda Mofya	F	Centre for Peace Initiatives in Africa. Regional organisation
Dr Bheki Moyo	M	Africa Institute of South Africa
Andriamandrato Razafimandimby	M	Voahary Salama, Madagascar
Assetou Koite	F	PAWO, Angola
Lucy Muyoyeta	F	NGO Coordinating Council, Zambia

## 10. The Way Forward and Concluding Remarks

In closing the meeting, both the facilitator Mr. Manikai and Mr. Mutasa acknowledged that it was encouraging to note that the Consultative Meeting had been extremely constructive and had achieved its objectives. They both expressed hope that it was a sign of things to come in order to ensure that indeed ECOSOCC works and benefits the African people.

The Southern Africa Bureau representative and Executive Director of AFRODAD, expressed deep appreciation for the commitment, enthusiasm and team spirit of the participants. He summed up the meeting by making a few key issues emanating from the meeting, that is:

- It is "one thing claiming the space and another occupying/filling the space". CSOs still have the arduous task of replacing the language of roles and stakeholders with rights, responsibilities and obligations. To be proactive civil society needs to be organised, learning institutions and to deal with those NGOs without mandates.
- Clarity of vision is necessary in order to move forward, and as such ECOSOCC must not be a vehicle for incorporating CS into silence.

## Appendix I: List of Participants

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