



5th Citizens' Continental Conference on the 13th African Union Summit

Addis Ababa; Ethiopia: 5, 6 June 2009

13th Ordinary Summit of the African Union Assembly

Theme: "Investing in Agriculture for Economic Growth and Food Security"

Draft Concept Note

Background

The Centre for Citizens' Participation in the African Union (CCP-AU) which is an independent platform committed to the actualization of a people-centered African Union, aspires to broaden and strengthen opportunities for substantive AU-CSO engagement. We, at the CCP-AU, truly believe that the citizens of Africa are the ones at the wheel, to drive the agenda of the union to bring about integration of African people, and the process of setting agendas and policy debates should not be limited to Heads of States and Governments.

The launching of ECOSOCC which was supposed to give the ultimate solution to the age old issue of African Citizens' participation in the African Union affair, did not bring the expected result. A number of technical provisions contained in the *Statutes of the ECOSOCC* seem built-in to hamper on the efficiency and effectiveness of the ECOSOCC as an organ (i.e. eligibility requirements for membership), and the lack of coordination between the current members, the stalemate in the electoral process, and the absence of any strategic working plan figure amongst the challenges.

To this end, indigenous CSOs and other stakeholders have been organizing consultation meetings at various levels with the idea of informing the people of Africa about the current process including their voices within the decision making bodies of the African Union. The CCP-AU has also trained 120 African CSOs leaders from Ghana, Ethiopia, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco, on the structure of the AU and ways on how to engage it. At the completion of the training workshops, citizens' continental conferences were organized. Over the last two years, CCP-AU has gathered over 350 CSOs' representatives from all over the continent to engage the last four African Union Summits. Those continental conferences resulted in concrete recommendations which were compiled into

Citizens' Communiqué systematically distributed to all delegations attending and media covering the Summits.

The Project

The above mentioned four Citizens' Continental Conferences held so far have provided pan-African CSOs who had not fully exploited the opportunity to engage the AU to organize and engage the greater continental body. These past efforts were fruitful to the extent that large numbers of citizens and NGOs were able to participate in healthy debates and come to a consensus on broad summit issues.

With the introduction of expert working groups on Social Development Policy and Peace and Security, during the last continental conference, we had the benefit of having strong discussions and actionable recommendations come out thereafter. The idea of creating permanent working groups within CCP-AU and continuing the discussion virtually was also a great achievement that resulted from the subsequent discussion held after the Summit. This decision was supported by the reality that a weak concerted effort by CSOs exists after the completion of summits, and there is lack of continued presence and engagement on different issues that are discussed at ministerial level meetings across the continent in between summits.

One key innovation introduced in CCP-AU's engagement strategy is to organize activists' visits to key influential capitals within the continent. The teams piloted this activity after the completion of the 4th Citizens' Continental Conference, and will do the same now, by organizing popular mobilization (including media actions) and meeting with decision makers ahead of their trip to the Summit. This *Capitals Visit* activity will not only highlight the need to engage at the capital level to encourage ownership and transparency of policies that affect citizens, but will also reiterate the importance Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have in terms of being officially part of the AU mechanism. CCP-AU also believes that the engagement and lobbying efforts should not be limited to the bi-annual ordinary summits, and under the overall strategy that will be agreed upon at the citizens conference in Addis Ababa, in June 2009- our identification of strong organizations and personalities in Addis Ababa as well as throughout the continent will be key to us meeting our goal and continued success.

At the completion of the 5th Citizens' Continental Conference, we expect our virtual working group members in conjunction with CSO experts that will be present, to finalize a policy position paper on Agriculture, Food Security and Access to Land, that we plan to launch alongside the *Citizens' Communiqué* which we will use to lobby the decision makers in capitals as well as during the AU 13th Ordinary Summit to be held from June 26- July 3, 2009.

To this end, we at CCP-AU would like to use this gathering of CSOs/NGOs to deliberate on key issues that we deem to be of extreme importance to peace and development in the continent. The broad Socio-Economic Justice theme will have key issues on Agriculture/Food Crisis and Security within it. Other topics that will

be agenda issues for the 13th Ordinary Summit regarding Peace and Security, Human Rights and Gender issues in Africa will also be deliberated on. In addition to this, we would like to use this gathering to assess the value of our work thus far, update each other on key issues and policies that are bound to be relevant for the coming 1 year, consult on our sustainable engagement strategy and adopt common positions on select issues that we believe the African CSO voice is missing.

Topics of Discussions

Agriculture and Food Security

The issue of Land, Agriculture, and subsequently the dire issue of food security are of crucial importance to Africans. The Theme for the 13th Ordinary AU Summit entitled “Investing in Agriculture to ensure Food Security” comes at an opportune time and is vital to our development strategy as a whole. CCP-AU is extremely excited to be putting the issue of agriculture, access to land and food security in the forefront of the discussions.

Peace & Security

The reoccurring issue of political and military instability and conflict in different regions within the Continent is also at the centre of the discussions. Peace and Security is in effect, a crucial building block to Development and Africa is not going to be on the path to growth and development, before this criteria has been met. There have been unfortunate developments in various regions, relating to instability creating factors such as Coup d’Etats, assassinations and electoral Fraud.

Coordination of CSOs’ engagement Strategy

There is currently a proliferation of inadequately coordinated efforts by CSOs to engage the AU system and processes. This has resulted in conflicting messages, institutional competition and narrowing of the space available for effective and inclusive CSO engagement with the AU. The effective collaboration of CSOs and common engagement strategy is needed at this critical juncture where results are expected for the betterment of the continent as a whole.

Specific Objectives of the Continental Conference

The objectives of the Continental Conference are:

- To bring African CSOs up to date on the continent’s Agricultural and Food Security issues and have concrete recommendations
- To discuss and come up with strong, common positions on the Peace and Security, Human Rights and Gender issues that are affecting our continent
- To strategize on the ways of working amongst CSOs- covering the existing networks and determining the process of how to empower grassroots and

local initiatives as well as our overall engagement with the RECs and the impact

Expected Outcomes

By the end of the conference we would have:

- Formulated a strong policy position on the overall Agricultural and Land issue in Africa and prepare the positions that we would lobby at the national, regional and continental level going forward
- Come to a consensus on the African CSO position regarding the Peace and Security, and Human Rights situation in the continent, which will be communicated to the decision makers in the capitals as well as the decision makers at the African Union
- Discussed and agreed on common collaborative efforts and strategies towards ensuring the meaningful involvement of citizens into the entire decision making process of the AU, at the national and regional level
- Convened at least 60 key African and international NGO/CSOs from each of the five regions of Africa

Proposed Participants

60 participants, drawn from a broad representation of academia, independent think tanks, gender-oriented groups, Pan-African and International development NGO communities in Africa and the Diaspora, as well as activist NGOs at national levels. The organizers are planning to bring at least two people from each of the five regions of the African continent to participate with at least 20 Ethiopian CSO leaders. In addition, the organizers will issue an open call on the CCP-AU website (www.ccpau.org) and list-serve as well as www.aumonitor.org for an additional 20 local as well as Pan-African participants who are interested and can come to the conference at their own expense.

Working languages

- English
- French

Format of the Conference

The conference will take the form of panel discussions in plenary aimed to promote debate and dialogue, while thematic multi-track roundtables run by specialized organizations will ensure more interactive and productive discussions and concrete recommendations. The roundtables will each focus on a specific issue aided by analytical discussion paper presentations and the subsequent recommendations will be not be debated but adopted by the larger plenary group. Organizations can decide not to sign on.

