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EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
Fifth Ordinary Session
25 June – 3 July 2004
Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA

EX.CL/118(V) vii

REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CONFERENCE
ON SECURITY, STABILITY, DEVELOPMENT AND
COOPERATION IN AFRICA (CSSDCA)
PROPOSED TO BE CIDO

**Report on the Activities of the Conference on Security, Stability,
Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA)**

1. Consistent with its mandate, the programme of the Commission as it relates to the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) in the period under consideration focused on (a) mainstreaming civil society participation in the affairs of the Union, (b) developing an appropriate framework for engaging with and harnessing the contributions of the African Diaspora towards development on the continent and (c) adapting the CSSDCA process itself to the vision and mission statement and strategic framework of action of the Commission of the African Union.

Operationalization of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council ECOSOCC)

2. It will be recalled that at its 4th Ordinary Session held in Maputo, Mozambique, in July 2003, the Executive Council, directed that the Draft statutes of ECOSOCC should be subject to even broader consultations with civil society and reviewed by the Permanent Representative Committee (PRC). The Commission undertook a process of national and regional consultations with civil society groups between July and December 2003, and their inputs were reflected in the ECOSOCC Draft Statutes.

3. Subsequently, the Draft Statutes was reviewed by the PRC on 11 and 14 June 2004. The Draft Statutes endorsed by the PRC would be submitted to the Executive Council and Assembly for consideration during this July Summit in order to enable ECOSOCC to be operationalized and to take its rightful place besides other key institutions such as the Peace and Security Council, the Pan African Parliament, etc. Civil Society is an integral part of this sustained effort. The Third meeting of the PWG that met in Cairo, Egypt, from 22 to 24 May 2004, discussed strategies for mobilizing support for this purpose and modalities for implementation. Adoption of ECOSOCC statutes during the upcoming July Summit of 2004 will complement this effort and send a strong and positive signal to civil society organizations about the commitment of the Union and its political leadership to foster and cement partnership with civil society, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitutive Act of the Union.

The AU Civil Society Provisional Working Group (PWG): Efforts and Contributions

4. ECOSOCC when it becomes operational will serve as a civil society organ for collating and rendering professional advice and opinions to the executive organs and instruments of the Union. In this regard, it will usurp the mandate of the PWG that was elected as a regular consultative body in June 2002 by the general AU-Civil Society Conference. Coincidentally, the tenure of the PWG is for a period of two years, which ends on 11 June 2004.

5. The PWG has performed valuable functions in its short period of existence. The Group had a pioneering role in promoting regular consultations and structured dialogue between the AU Commission and civil society. It also contributed substantially to the process of institutional development as evidenced in the development of the ECOSOCC Draft Statutes and the Criteria for the Granting of Observer Status to the AU. It also provided a framework for the elaboration of the Diaspora agenda within the CSSDCA process, which has now become a strategic objective of the African Union. The process inspired the amendment contained in Article 3(q) that recognized the Diaspora as an important component of the African Union.

6. However, there have also been some minor drawbacks. Some civil society groups have criticized the representative nature of the AU-CSO general conference of June 2002 and the criteria for selection of the PWG. At the Civil Society Forum that met in Mauritius in June 2000 before the Trade Ministers meeting, civil society organizations severely criticized the process by which representatives to the AU-Civil Society Conference of June 2002 were selected through governments and embassies. Their view was that such processes undermined the prospects of collating authentic civil society views and opinions. They advised that since the inputs of civil society groups would be advisory, the added value of such inputs would be derived from their authenticity and ability to add something that is not government derived so that the AU in contrast to the OAU would be more inclusive as envisaged in the Constitutive Act of the Union. Moreover, since the inputs of the CSOs would be simply advisory, the intergovernmental nature of the AU would be enriched and not threatened by having access to such opinions.

7. In addition, some regional representatives on the PWG have not fully delivered on the promise of sensitization and raising consciousness at the regional level. There are extenuating circumstances. Some NGOs suffer capacity constraints. Others are self-absorbed. Yet others could not manage to devise a programme approach that links continental purpose to the agendas of their respective organizations. Some have managed to overcome these obstacles and consolidate the partnership agenda.

8. It is important to accommodate the experience of the PWG in the development of ECOSOCC. The organ must inspire legitimacy by being truly representative and seen to be so among civil society Groups. Member States should remain conscious of the boundaries and powers of ECOSOCC. ECOSOCC is an advisory body whose counsel may or may not be heeded. It is not a decision making body and thus does not detract from the powers and ability of Member States to make decisions. The views of ECOSOCC would be passed through appropriate organs of the Commission. It is essential that we have access to these views to make the AU inclusive and to foster partnership with civil society as stipulated in the Constitutive Act of the Union. The alternative is to encourage confrontational postures and alternative forums or paradigms that would undermine the activities of the organization. The CSSDCA Unit is now in constant dialogue with various civil society groups across the continent on a daily basis, providing briefings on the activities of the Union and receiving the same from civil society organizations as well as advisory opinions from civil society groups on the activities of the

AU. We have started building a partnership that is fostering confidence among civil societies and we must continue on this path and strengthen it.

9. The relationship between CSO representatives and the AU organs should also derive strength and commitment from reciprocity. CSO representatives must fully embrace their obligations and take initiative to mobilize support and sensitize their constituents without relying on the Commission for financial sustenance. Finally, the experience of the PWG directs attention at the need for "quality dialogues" between the AU and civil society to inform and underwrite the structure of relationships. Such demand-driven quality dialogues must be situated in the context provided by the Constitutive Act, which recognizes ECOSOCC as an advisory organ to present advice and opinions as appropriate. Within this context, executive organs and instruments of the Union should also accept their obligation to give sufficient recognition and weight to the advice of ECOSOCC.

AU-Civil Society Relations Outside ECOSOCC

10. The Commission also has a responsibility to allow and develop a framework of association and partnership outside ECOSOCC that will be focused on relationship with networks, ad hoc arrangements and coalitions, bilateral undertakings, etc. This has several advantages. It will create a framework for CSOs that are not members of ECOSOCC to contribute directly and substantially to the continental agenda. It will avoid the organizational ethos of "bureaucratizing or regimentalizing" civil society within the construct of ECOSOCC. It will also recognize the loose and associative character of civil society organizations and situate the boundaries of ECOSOCC and the Pan-African Parliament. Since the ECOSOCC Draft Statutes is based on sectoral clusters that are aligned with the portfolios of the Commission, it will provide a framework for ensuring inter-sectoral linkages.

11. A Working Group on Strengthening relations between the Commission of the African Union and civil society was convened on 10 March 2004 to look closely at this matter and it came up with a set of very useful recommendations, including the need to elaborate on the idea of creating National Commissions and modalities for strengthening the content, purpose and character of AU-CSO intercourse and the means for its sustenance.

12. The CSSDCA has also been fully involved with preparations for the African Conference of Intellectuals in Africa and the Diaspora scheduled for Dakar, Senegal from 6-9, 2004 and thus contributed substantially to its preparatory process and meetings.

The Diaspora Agenda

13. In fulfillment of the Executive Council Decision of Sun City, in May 2003, the Commission's first priority has been on expanding contacts with the Diaspora.

14. The African Diaspora has been a very eager partner in this enterprise. Moreover, the process of integration and consultations that have been carried out so far show that apart from distribution of the Diaspora among the various regions of the World - North America, South America, Europe, Asia, the Gulf regions, etc - there are also three different tendencies in the Diaspora movement. The first group is the continental African Diaspora comprising the African Diaspora on the continent itself. This group has begun to organize itself for participation in the AU process. The major initiative has come from the African Diaspora Forum based in Ghana. The second is the outside Diaspora that is spread unevenly among the various regions of the world. The outside Diaspora has two subsets, namely, the ancient and modern Diaspora. The ancient Diaspora is the generational descendant of those who were dispersed by the slave trade. The second subset is mostly economic migrants who are relatively recent or first generational émigrés. Several attempts have also been made by the outside Diaspora to organize themselves and to bring their thoughts to bear on key challenges of the Diaspora initiative.

15. Inevitably, tensions have arisen particularly among the outside Diaspora between the ancient and modern in the bid for leadership of the movement and partnership with the AU. The challenge of the Commission in this regard is to impose cohesion through a visionary and inclusive process that goes beyond egos and ambitions. As part of the process, the Commission convened a technical workshop in Trinidad and Tobago from 2-5 June 2004 in association with the Western Hemisphere African Diaspora Network (WHADN), which is based in Washington. H.E. Mr. Patrick Manning, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago delivered the opening address at this meeting. The Prime Minister observed that the African Diaspora is a global Diaspora... with communities of African descended people scattered all over the world in the Caribbean, Latin America, the North Atlantic and in many other places far and wide. He welcomed the initiative of the African Union to strengthen relations with the Diaspora and noted "it doesn't matter who or where we are. The essence of our human capacity for achievement is best brought out in a spirit of co-operation and integration". The workshop reflected on the issues raised by the Executive Council Decision of Sun City in May 2003 as directed. The outcome will be reviewed by the AU Commission with a view to submitting a strategy paper on consolidation of the Diaspora initiative to the Executive Council meeting of February 2005.

16. The choice of Port of Spain in Trinidad and Tobago as venue for this meeting was not accidental. It was, in part a tribute to the great Sylvester Williams and the first Pan-African Conference held under his leadership in London in 1900. The choice was also informed by the Executive Council decision of Sun City that stressed the need to expand contact with the African Diaspora in various regions of the world. The Caribbean has one of the largest concentrations of people of African descent outside the geographical confines of the Union. The decision to hold the workshop on modalities of effective partnership with the African Diaspora in this region offered the opportunity of using one event to meet the two requirements set by the Executive Council. In order to consolidate the objective of facilitating contacts, an outreach and sensitization programme for the Caribbean Diaspora was organized by the Emancipation Support Committee of Trinidad

and Tobago on the margins of the meeting. The programme established the foundations for a Caribbean Diaspora Network to work with the AU on its agenda.

17. A key priority here is to determine who is a Member of the Diaspora. The outcome of the Workshop in Trinidad and Tobago has provided a working definition that the Commission would soon be putting forward for consideration of the Executive Council as demanded in Sun City, South Africa, in May 2003.

18. The Commission has also convened a Working Group on the creation of a Network of experts "on tap" from the Continent and the Diaspora to help in resolving key problems. The Commission will soon initiate plans for implementing this agenda in accordance with the conclusions of the meeting.

Institutional Transformation

19. As part of the process of defining a strategic plan of action for the Commission in the next four years, the Commission has also initiated a process of re-defining the agenda of the CSSDCA to focus more explicitly on critical areas of concern such as the civil society agenda, the Diaspora, civil society and private sector forums, religious, social and professional forums, etc that are required to promote a wider sense of African citizenship. The cardinal objective is to develop a people-driven African Union to drive the processes of integration and development and to foster prosperity. To accomplish this purpose, however, the institutional capacity of the programme should be strengthened and upgraded. It would also be useful to have a user-friendlier name that is clearly aligned with this specific orientation. The AU Commission is therefore proposing the name CIDO – focusing on civil society and Diaspora organizations – to replace the CSSDCA.

20. In conclusion, the main purpose of the CSSDCA process is to initiate, sustain and strengthen credible policy dialogues that would impact seriously on integration of development in Africa. Our immediate four-year plan of action (2004-2007) has as its focus the creation of an African web. The web would only be effective and purpose-driven if it is people-oriented.

21. The Commission wishes to recommend to the Council five broad measures to support this objective as follows:

- a) The mapping of civil society organizations within Member States to see precisely who is there and who does what, how and where. This database will allow for flexibility in mandate and purpose to interact decisively with non-state actors and partners across the broad spectrum of Union activities, both within and outside ECOSOCC, particularly the latter.
- b) The initiation of broad policy discourse among African policy makers to renew and reinvigorate their commitment to sustain a people-driven agenda. This will involve retreats with the PRC Members so that we all have

a common definition of what a people-oriented African Union would involve and collectively explore strategies for its promotion and sustenance.

- c) Effective outreach and sensitization strategy that would create a sense of solidarity and stimulate result-oriented “quality dialogues” and effective partnerships.
- d) Strengthening the human resource capacity of the CSSDCA (CIDO) to cope with the enormous responsibility of civil society and Diaspora engagement across regions.
- e) Authority to reconstitute the CSSDCA, as required, in order to align it with its new institutional focus and to change its name accordingly to CIDO.

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