



Media Release

For immediate release

Thursday, 17 February 2011

African Researchers Disclose Results on Governance in Africa

The Southern Africa Trust, TrustAfrica, the Institute for Global Dialogue and the Continental Advisory Research Team of civil society organisations that work on African Union issues will launch two publications, *(Dis) Enabling the Public Sphere: Civil Society Regulation in Africa (volume 1)* and the *State of the Union: South Africa Report*, and host a debate about the issues raised in the publications on Wednesday, 23 February 2011. The event will be held at the Southern Sun Hotel, Beatrix Street, Pretoria, South Africa starting at 11h30.

The topic for discussion is **Africa's democracy: is the environment enabling or disabling?**

(Dis) Enabling the Public Sphere: Civil Society Regulation in Africa analyses the legislative and the regulatory environment for civil society organisations in Africa through country level and comparative assessments.

Failure to understand the regulatory environment in which civil society groups operate has often led to inappropriate development strategies, strained relations with post-colonial African states and major accountability challenges between state and non state actors in Africa. The increasingly restrictive regulation of the public sphere – whether non-governmental organisations, the media, political or religious associations – across the continent has also raised tricky questions about participatory governance and successful development.

The State of the Union: South Africa Report analyses South Africa's compliance with 12 selected African Union (AU) commitments. Eight of these are treaties while four are strategies, resolutions or plans of action.

Although the report shows that significant progress has been made in South Africa, compliance with some instruments is hampered by insufficient political will, low levels of awareness by government officials, and inadequate public demand for compliance, among other factors.

"African Union member countries must embrace a regional identity and look at things from a collective perspective. Our national laws and strategies should be aligned with the continental ones. That way progress on the continent can be monitored and realised more quickly," said Themba Mhlongo, Head of Programmes at the Southern Africa Trust.

The implementation of continental commitments, including creating a better environment for engagement between state and non-state actors, is required for greater coherence and effectiveness in Africa's poverty reduction and development efforts.

Join a panel of great minds that include Prof Andre Mangu of the University of South Africa, Dr Siphamandla Zondi of the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD), Mr Vukani Mthintso of the Independent

Development Trust (IDT) and Ms Ingrid Srinath, the Secretary General of CIVICUS, for a stimulating debate about these emerging issues. ETV's Chris Maroleng will facilitate the discussion.

Members of the media are invited to the event.

The Southern Africa Trust is an independent non-profit agency that supports deeper and wider regional engagement between governments and non-state actors to overcome poverty in southern Africa.

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