



Media release

Johannesburg, 12h00, Thursday, 03 September 2009

Southern Africa Trust Set for Greater Collaboration with Mauritius

The Southern Africa Trust today signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare and Reform Institutions of Mauritius and the Mauritius Council of Social Service (MACOSS) to co-operate in building the capability of civil society to engage in pro-poor policy influencing work at the national and regional levels. The MoU is aimed at promoting greater citizen participation in national poverty reduction initiatives and regional integration in Mauritius and the southern Africa region.

The MoU was signed in Port Louis, Mauritius by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare and Reform Institutions, Mr Anbanaden Veerasamy, MACOSS Secretary, Mr Ram Nookadee, and Mr Neville Gabriel, Executive Director of the Southern Africa Trust. It was attended by the Mauritian Minister of Social Security, Ms Sheilabai Bappoo, and the Chairperson of MACOSS, Mr Mekraj Baldowa.

"For an effective and sustained drive to overcome poverty in our region, it is imperative to increase engagement between civil society organizations and governments. We need to develop leadership in both sectors to strengthen the capability of both to do this. We need to develop stronger relations of accountability and cohesion between governments and citizens' organizations. That's what we are committing to do together today," said Gabriel.

Key areas of collaboration include:

1. Setting up a Civil Society Leadership Academy: A regional civil society learning and leadership centre to strengthen policy and advocacy skills, promote civil society governance and accountability, and develop networking skills;
2. A "leadership for change" programme for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Mauritius and the rest of the southern Africa region which will be an ongoing programme with the first intake in 2010;
3. The identification of 30 to 50 organisations in the field of poverty reduction, for capacity development over the next three years;
4. Promoting awareness about new national legislative frameworks for NGOs in the region, including Mauritius; and
5. Strengthening corporate social responsibility mechanisms in support of the NGO sector.

The mission of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare and Reform Institutions of Mauritius is to protect, promote and enhance social welfare and national solidarity of citizens. One of its objectives is to empower the NGO sector.

Mauritius Council of Social Service (MACOSS) which is an umbrella organisation for Non Governmental Organisations that seeks to promote social and community development and voluntary actions through NGOs.

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

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