

African Civil Society Organizations and the Pan African Parliament Consultative Dialogue

*Report on building effective mechanisms for
civil society engagement with Pan African
and Regional Institutions*

7- 8 May 2007

Gallagher Estate
Midrand, South Africa

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Introduction

The dialogue informed civil society organizations about the official opportunities available for engagement with the Pan African Parliament and provided direction for a way forward to have a more structured approach to civil society engagement with the Pan African Institutions. Civil society was also able to deliberate on a range of areas impeding effective participation in issues, that affect Africa's development. Civil society was also provided with a platform to exchange views with the Presidency of the Pan African Parliament about their interests in deepening engagement with the Parliament.

The briefing on civil society engagement in the aid effectiveness agenda surfaced a number of critical issues around poverty and related matters in the build up to the continental platform on aid effectiveness to be held in Ghana in 2008. Civil society was appraised of the important issues and provided with the opportunity to flag critical points to be taken forward to Ghana 2008.

The debate on the proposal on the African Union Government highlighted key aspects and dynamics that needed attention of civil society, placed the debate on priority list of civil society agenda, provided a poverty lens with which to view the issues, stimulated civil society debate and solicited perspectives on

the proposal as input into the African Union Summit in Ghana in July 2007.

Commissions surfaced a number of important and pertinent recommendations and the forum concluded with a commitment to take forward the proposal on the interface mechanism in Midrand and a decision on the implementation plan of proposed interface mechanism. A task force was agreed on to work with the Pan African Parliament.

There was also a commitment by the Southern Africa Trust to supporting the millennium campaign initiative by working with Civicus and other civil society formations.

Opening of the 1st Consultative Dialogue between African Civil Society Organizations and the Pan African Parliament

The session on the official opening of the consultative dialogue between civil society and the Pan African Parliament provided a platform for civil society organizations to exchange views with the Presidency of the Pan African Parliament about deepening engagement between civil society and the Parliament; informed civil society organizations about the official opportunities available for engagement with the Parliament; and provided direction for a possible way forward for a more structured approach to civil society engagement with the Parliament. The session also provided an opportunity for the interaction to be popularised and publicised through the participation of the mass media.

The main speakers were **Hon Gertrude Mongella**, President of the Pan African Parliament and **Charles Mutasah**, Vice President: AU ECOSOCC.

In his presentation, Mr Mutasah emphasised that democracy needs a strong parliament and a vigilant media and civil society. In this regard, ECOSOCC provides a number of forums working towards the mobilization of an active civil society that is able to engage with ECOSOCC. He pointed out that resources at this point are a constraint and expressed his appreciation to international funding organizations for providing ECOSOCC with much needed support. He indicated that an important initiative of fact finding missions to the troubled areas needs to be the undertaking and in light of the recognition that engaging civil society is a necessity, there needs to be public hearings between the Pan African Parliament and civil society around selected themes.

In her speech, Hon Mongella indicated that there has been a long time suspicion between civil society and governments. She believes that the problem is that this perspective does not recognize that most government officials come from civil society backgrounds and therefore civil society does not need to behave like an opposition party. She emphasised that it is the duty of civil society and parliament to monitor the services provided by government and there need not be an adversarial relationship between them. The focus should be around how civil society and parliament can give a voice to the voiceless and the Pan African Parliament is always ready to engage with civil society in this regard.

In the follow-up discussion the main issues included the limited participation by civil society in the affairs of the Pan African Parliament; the role of the Pan African Parliament in strengthening the regional parliamentary forums in terms of representing

African peoples; and the extent to which the Pan African Parliament scrutinizes and debates public policy choices on the African continent.

Mr Mutasa acknowledged that civil society may not be completely in tune with how the process of participation in the affairs of the Pan African Parliament works. The difficulty or reluctance to participate may arise from the knowledge that the PAP does not have legislative powers at this point. Hon Gertrude Mongella pointed out that the problem may be exacerbated by technological and linguistic limitations – where physical communications infrastructure in Africa is still underdeveloped and coupled with the linguistic plurality makes communicating difficult.

With respect to strengthening the regional parliamentary forums, the PAP President emphasized the importance of value addition between national parliaments and regional parliamentary forums. In her view, PAP may try to help but because of resource constraints it was important that it does not do this alone and shoulder the responsibility for the limitations at regional parliamentary level. She acknowledged that the Pan African Parliament needs to engage more stakeholders on public policy debates and that the opportunity created by the collaboration with civil society will go a long way towards achieving this objective.

Other issues raised by civil society representatives related to the limited impact of the PAP members of parliament to connect with the population in their respective countries. In this regard, it was suggested that research may be undertaken to ascertain their capacity to do so. It was also observed that the sustainability of interaction between civil society and parliamentarians was a concern since the MPs' tenure of office is not permanent. Participants also questioned why parliamentarians were not present at the consultative dialogue which gave them an opportunity to engage civil society.

In response to these and other issues the PAP representative (Ms Lyn Chiwandamira) indicated that they would welcome a study to look at the capacity constraints facing the parliamentarians as it would enable them to take appropriate measures to address such issues. She emphasized that parliamentarians were interested in engaging civil society but logistical problems prevented their participation on that particular day. She pointed out that that since it was the opening day of parliament and regional caucuses were taking place as well as the fact that parliamentarians were in parliament for 2 weeks with a massive agenda, made it impossible for MPs to attend the civil society-PAP dialogue meeting. She also cautioned that civil society need not to wait for parliamentarians to begin dialogue but they could meet them in their respective countries. She also indicated that discussions were underway to create a centre for dialogue and knowledge management in the Pan African Parliament which will interface with civil society to ensure continuity and institutional memory for MPs.

Participants were critical of the fact that the PAP representative argued that civil society needed to be pro-active when it came to participation in the affairs of the Pan African Parliament. Civil society argued that PAP also needed to be pro-active in promoting participation since it was a two way process. The PAP representative pointed out that PAP processes don't take place in camera but are open to the public, however, she acknowledged that there was a need to attract members of the public to attend the deliberations and in that context PAP was forging ahead with the idea of a civil society dialogue unit that will facilitate such interaction.

Fostering civil society engagement with the Pan African Parliament

This session dealt with the institutional framework for civil society engagement with the Pan African Parliament. This framework finds its basis in the founding texts of the Pan African Parliament, the African Union and the Charter on Popular Participation.

However, civil society is not effectively using these spaces and opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue and participation. This is partly because these spaces are limited and have limitations but also because civil society is not coordinated and lacks capacity to engage at that level. On the other hand, it was pointed out that official institutions do not have sufficient capability to actively engage with civil society formations in a sustained and meaningful way. In most cases, institutional spaces for engagement are often seen to be taken up by well-resourced civil society formations often working in an ad hoc manner and with varying degrees of effectiveness and to the exclusion of popular-based organizations. Moreover, linkages between national, regional and continental engagement initiatives are weak, if at all existent amongst civil society organizations and in inter-governmental processes. This limits the audibility of voices of the poor in regional and continental policy development processes. The session attempted to begin to scope, guide and inform civil society and the Pan African Parliament towards an integrated way of enabling better engagement between civil society formations and the Parliament. The session also served to inform civil society organizations about the official opportunities available for engagement with the Pan African Parliament and attempted

to provide direction for a possible way forward to have a more structured approach to civil society engagement with the Parliament.

The presenters were **Bhekinkosi Moyo**, Research Fellow at TrustAfrica on the interpretation of PAP rules of procedure in with respect to civil society engagement; **Lyn Chiwandamira**, Senior International Relations Officer at the Pan African Parliament on the opportunities for civil society engagement with PAP; and **Imraan Buccus**, Research Manager at the Centre for Public Participation, as discussant.

Mr Moyo provided an interpretation of the rules of procedure of the Pan African Parliament in relation to civil society engagement which focused on the specific sections of the rules of procedure. He pointed out that civil society holds that view that there aren't sufficient spaces for civil society to participate and therefore there is a need to create more accessible spaces for civil society engagement with Pan African Institutions including the Pan African Parliament.

In his view, Article 17 of the Constitutive Act, the Strategic Plan of the Pan African Parliament 2006-2010, and other founding legal instruments of the Pan African Parliament,

Also the objectives of the parliament show that there is a desire on the part of the Pan African Parliament to work with civil society. However, Pan African Parliament interacts largely with research institutes and think tanks, particularly those that provide a research function to the parliament.

provide a clear indication of the political will for public participation in the affairs of the Pan African Parliament. Also the objectives of the parliament show that there is a desire on the part of the Pan African Parliament to work with civil society. However, in practice Mr Moyo found that the Pan African Parliament interacts largely with research institutes and think tanks, particularly those that provide a research function to the parliament. He advised that there was a need for greater publicity about the activities of the parliament including through workshops and seminars and school visits.

Ms Chiwandamira acknowledged that there is still a minimal interaction between the Pan African Parliament and civil society despite the provision of a number of spaces. She pointed out that it must be acknowledged that the Pan African Parliament has not done enough to market participation mechanisms but also civil society formations are not coming forward to bring much valuable reports that they may have. She also emphasised that the Pan African Parliament is transparent in its deliberations and anyone can walk in and listen to the sessions.

Mr Buccus, responding to the two presentations focused on key issues such as public hearings, documentation, media and publicity, education and awareness, etc which are important for improving the relationship between civil society and the Pan African Parliament. In his view, there was a need for country representatives at the Pan African Parliament to be doing

constituency work in terms of engaging citizens in their countries so that their voices can be brought to parliament. He pointed out that his experience of advocating for participation in South Africa's legislature points to the importance of engaging in pre-hearing work whereby communities are enabled to understand the content of proposed legislation or issue being discussed and its implications, and are able to develop their responses.

He advised that the Pan African Parliament in its outreach must carefully identify stakeholder groups to invite to hearings by categorising them through a database and matching their interest. He also advised that in addressing issues relating to representation and voice within civil society the Pan African Parliament should be mindful in planning for hearings of issues relating to which groups are invited to make presentations or submissions, and who speaks on behalf of groups or communities. He also recommended that public hearings must take place using plain and simple language, and should be facilitated in order to be interactive and participatory to enable greater deliberative dialogue on policy options.

Mr Buccus also touched on the issue of documentation and linked it to effective participation in that the necessary information and documents be made available timeously to civil society so that their participation can be meaningful. He observed that quite often official documents were highly technical

Another important point was that elite civil society organisations are being used to represent the poor people because they understand policy issues better and therefore there is a need to foster linkages and coalitions between the elite and the poor so as to strengthen the voices of the poor.

and too complicated for ordinary people to understand which limited their participation.

Furthermore, he emphasised the role of media and publicity in the dissemination of information to communities to empower them to engage meaningfully. He recommended creative use of formal and community media, particularly community electronic media which, in this view, was the most penetrative medium of communication. This would ensure that rural communities were afforded meaningful opportunities to participate. He also recommended supplementary media strategies, especially for rural community by making use of local networks such as schools, church groups, municipalities, and traditional leadership structures – to ensure that diverse and marginalised communities gain access to information.

He also identified education and awareness as important because ordinary people don't know enough about issues around the Pan African Parliament or regional and continental governance in general, and therefore there was need to make visible such activities including through school visits and tours, promotional material, workshops and seminars. The other problem was the notion that communities and civil society in general do not give sufficient attention to regional and continental matters seeing them at as somewhat dislocated from their realities. Education and publicity campaigns were needed to change that situation.

In response, participants interrogated the concept of participation and argued that it must be informed by specific aims and objectives. In this respect, civil society must develop joint ownership of processes and their outcomes. However, ownership of the processes and their outcomes by civil society was linked to the nature of participation in which civil society is regarded as invited guests. The consensus was that civil society needs to invent or create its own agenda and spaces for participation in order to meaningfully engage with the Pan African Parliament. The issue of participation by civil society was also linked to the balance of power in the sense that one needed to be mindful of the fact that power was inequitably distributed between those who own the space and those who are invited.

Another important issue was the need to institutionalise the relationship between civil society and the Pan African Parliament so that the obligations of both sides are explicit. There was agreement about the need to institutionalise the relationship between civil society and PAP even though the rules of procedure of the Pan African Parliament outline the process of civil society participation. The institutionalisation was envisaged to include both invited spaces (proposed civil society unit in the Pan African Parliament) and invented spaces (an autonomous arrangement created by civil society outside intergovernmental institutions).

Participants kept returning to the issue that elite (well resourced, urban) civil society formations overwhelmingly occupy spaces for participation. Also, worth noting and important for discussion was the fact that social movements often disown official spaces for participation opting to create their own spaces including the possibility of registering discontent through open protest. Another important point was that elite civil society organisations are being used to represent the poor people because they understand policy issues better and therefore there is a need to foster linkages and coalitions between the elite and the poor so as to strengthen the voices of the poor. Although there was agreement that both elite and non-elite civil society organisations are needed, disagreement emerged around the issue of the elites knowing more about policies than the poor. It was argued that poor are aware and do know about policies and participation in these processes but may lack resources. An example was given that of Abahlali baseMjondolo - a Durban social movement of the homeless poor that have managed to influence policy debate. There was also agreement with the issue that protest is an important form of participation especially given the fact that power does not cede easily unless there is a demand.

There was a general feeling that the rules of procedure of the Pan African Parliament are complicated and not user friendly and this could restrict effective participation by civil society. A related issue was that a great deal needs to be done around educating people and popularising regional governance issues. An agreement was reached that documents need to be simplified and translated into local indigenous languages in order to facilitate access to information. It was also concluded that there was a need to establish public

participation frameworks such as seminars, workshops and the use of schools to educate learners on issues of regional governance. Furthermore, media, particularly community electronic media should be used to educate people as this was the most penetrative form of medium of communication.

Civil society again raised the issue of the capacity of PAP committees with respect to discharging their duties of engaging the people on issues affecting Africa's development. This was also linked to building capacity of the parliamentarians and their research skills. Anecdotal data suggest that committees are weak and need to be strengthened. MPs could also use the work they do in their constituencies to involve citizens and civil society. Further, this could be a platform for regional civil society perspectives to the Parliament. There is also a need to train MPs in order for them to understand their role in inter-governmental structures.

There was also a view that civil society has come to lament about how government does not open up spaces for popular participation while the question could be: Are civil society formations ready to engage with these processes? The meeting felt that 'participation' is rather limiting and 'critical engagement' is more encompassing and preferred. The spaces for participation are already available and the point is that civil society is not making full use of these opportunities? It was agreed that civil society organisations must take up the available spaces for participation and perhaps the debate needs to move to engaging on the processes of critical engagement i.e. how does civil society come together with the state and stakeholders to engage.

Current Debates on Mechanisms for Civil Society Engagement with Pan African Institutions

This session focused on the mechanisms for civil society engagement with pan African institutions and noted that a few organizations have been working at a continental level to establish independent mechanisms to support African civil society organizations to effectively engage with them in a sustained manner. Each of these mechanisms is at different stages of development and is facing particular challenges. At the same time, a growing consciousness is emerging amongst the movers of such initiatives that creating new structures is only one part of the support that is required to improve the ability of civil society organizations to engage on key issues in which they have a stake such as redefining the continental aid architecture. Also important was the realisation that mechanisms for strengthening the technical content of such engagements are shared by partners.

The session provided briefings on the state of the two initiatives intended to facilitate civil society engagement with the pan African institutions with a view to soliciting the perspectives of all participants. It also provided a briefing on civil society engagement in the aid effectiveness debate towards the continental platform on aid effectiveness to be held in Ghana in 2008 with a view to soliciting the perspectives of participants on the aid effectiveness agenda as it relates to overcoming poverty in general and civil society participation in particular.

Speakers for the session included: **Ozias Tungwarara**, Director: AfriMap, Overview of civil society engagement with pan African institutions (including information on the establishment of a support facility for interface with the African Union Commission in Addis

Ababa); **Carlos Fumo and Bhekinkosi Moyo**, Consultants on the Scoping study for a civil society support mechanism to interface with pan African institutions in Midrand; and **Vitalice Meja**, Lobbying & Advocacy Programme Director: AFRODAD, Civil society and the aid effectiveness debate – towards Ghana 2008.

Mr Tungwarara reminded the meeting that the African Union vision is about 'Africa driven by its own citizens' but the reality at this point is that Africa is not driven by African citizens – civil society marginally drives processes. He acknowledged however, that there has been some increased engagement with civil society since the transition from OAU to African Union, and that there certainly is commitment to involving civil society e.g. African Peer Review Mechanism. He also recommended

that the diversity of engagement should be acknowledged as there are a number of different spaces for civil society to engage. He pointed out that civil society is also creating its own spaces separate from those of the African Union in order to further diversify and facilitate engagement.

He identified a number of obstacles at the African Union level that impede on civil society engagement including that: engagement on the African Union at national level is limited often to the office of the president and the ministry of foreign affairs; difficulty in accessing information which is usually not available timeously and hence restrain effective civil society input in key decisions; lack of consistent policy around accreditation for attending the African Union summit and related meetings; limited civil society capacity to engage when opportunity arises; and over stretched capacity of the African Union structures to meaningfully engage civil society. He recommended options for engagement including use of invited spaces and creating own spaces, and monitor and hold governments to account on the continental policies and decisions at national level.

Mr Fumo focused on the study for a civil society support mechanism to interface with pan African institutions in Midrand and observed that increasingly spaces are being opened and the Charter on Popular Participation talks about the need for participation. He informed the meeting that among a range of things, the study found that most people were in favour of independent spaces being created and incorporating the voice of the voiceless. He emphasised that processes like the APRM will

not be legitimate unless there is civil society participation at all levels and not just national level. He pointed out that NEPAD spaces at generic and programmatic level but the civil society desk is not yet functional and that civil society has limited knowledge of such spaces. He thinks that knowledge resides with research and expert institutes who are able to make use of them.

Mr Meja spoke on civil society and the aid effectiveness debate – towards Ghana 2008. He argued that domestic resources are the foundation for self sustaining development, but domestic savings are not always sufficient and only a few countries have functioning capital markets in Africa. ODA flows become one of the alternative supplements. Although ODA flows to Africa are on the increase, there is little evidence of poverty reduction and there is a growing argument that donor practices undermine domestic institutions.

In his view, in the light of the Paris Declaration there should be a move towards strengthening partner countries' national development strategies and donors need to align funding with national development plans. This should create harmonisation and avoid duplication. Currently some countries in Africa are heavily reliant on aid making it difficult for governments to exercise effective leadership, creating conditionalities around policy spaces, coupled with unpredictability of aid inflows, hence the important role of parliament and civil society oversight.

Discussion and contributions were referred to the commissions.

Overcoming Poverty or Strengthening Pan African Governance: Towards Integration?

This session focussed on overcoming poverty and strengthening pan African governance and identified as a major agenda item occupying the African Union at present: the proposal to establish the African Union Government towards a United States of Africa. This was reflected in the theme of the 7th Ordinary Session of the Pan African Parliament. It was noted that there has been very little continental civil society analysis, consultation and interaction on the proposal. At the same time, it was reported that some regional economic communities in Africa are not supportive of the proposal. Instead, they argue for the effective consolidation of existing pan African structures and for more effective regional integration before the establishment of a pan African Union government. Others argue that Africa should prioritize effective interventions to overcome poverty over and above the focus on establishing new structures, especially if existing structures are not adequately resourced to address pressing poverty interventions.

The session provided a briefing on the current status of the African Union Government debate highlighting the key aspects of the proposal and the key dynamics of the current debate, and provided a poverty lens with which to view the issue so as to stimulate civil society debate, solicit civil society perspectives on the proposal, inform the Pan African Parliament deliberations on the topic, and guide continental civil society advocacy interventions on the proposal toward the next African Union summit.

Speakers included: **Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem**, Deputy Director, Africa: Millennium Campaign, The Millennium Campaign in Africa 2007/8; and

Irungu Houghton, Pan Africa Policy Advisor: Oxfam GB, The next African Union Summit and the proposed African Union Government – which way for African civil society?

Mr Abdul-Raheem pointed out that the contribution of civil society is crucial for attaining MDGs and hence the millennium campaign to mobilise participation and support of all stakeholders. He indicated that some countries in Africa should be ashamed at the level of poverty and the idea that MDGs cannot be achieved is irrelevant since the success or failure in achieving MDGs depends on the commitment by leaders. He warned

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that if Africa continues to face unfair trading rules, the poor will remain poor. He observed that the mid term review in July 2007 offers an opportunity for civil society to ask governments hard questions around reaching MDGs.

Mr Houghton focused on the next African Union Summit and the proposed African Union Government and posed a question– which way for African civil society? He indicated that African countries face common challenges include over dependency and under exploitation of

Africa's resources for the benefit of developed countries. He sees the current proposal as an opportunity to achieve common policy standards. He believes the debate should be around building and strengthening AU structures, harmonising and rationalising regional economic communities and then taking the bold step towards creating the United States of Africa.

Discussion and contributions were referred to the commissions

Reports of the Parallel Commissions

1. Commission 1: Interface mechanisms with Pan African institutions

The deliberations focused on the relationship between the proposed interface mechanism with the pan African institutions including ECOSOCC as well as other civil society platforms that already exist in other Pan African Institutions. There was a perception that the proposed interface mechanism may undermine ECOSOCC. This was a misplaced fear though given that ECOSOCC the official organ of the AU and is still struggling to find its feet. Since ECOSOCC is an invited space for civil society there is a need to invent or create other alternative spaces to enable civil society to interface with intergovernmental institutions. Such spaces will complement rather than compete with ECOSOCC or any other invited spaces that already exist. Moreover, ECOSOCC can and should facilitate the work of the interface mechanism and vice versa.

Participants welcomed and pushed forcefully for the establishment of the proposed interface mechanism. However, they recommended that more critical analysis is required to the proposal. They argued for clarity and implementation modalities before the implementation of the interface mechanism could proceed. It was noted that the Pan African Parliament has accepted the need for the interface including a dedicated civil society unit, NEPAD has a civil society unit (invited space), and that APRM has not accepted either a civil society unit at the APRM Secretariat (invited space) nor the interface mechanism (invented space).

There was agreement that there are obstacles for civil society engagement in the AU and its organs and therefore the need to establish a body of this nature (interface mechanism) in

Addis Ababa was identified. There was a need for civil society to create 'their own space' to take forward 'their own agendas' and the proposed facility can host formal and informal meetings of civil society and regional structures, support advocacy work of civil society, organize events for civil society to brief press, etc. The question however was: How does civil society operationalise this facility?

It was emphasised that civil society has an obligation to engage and there is a need to secure the space for such an engagement. It is important for civil society to make submissions to the AU and its organs and the proposed facility will facilitate such processes. The AU is a people's institution, and ECOSOCC is a vehicle for civil society engagement with AU.

There was a feeling that APRM does not provide space for engagement with civil society over and above the national processes and the question was: why does civil society want to engage with this structure over and above the available framework for civil society engagement? Civil society need to think of a rationale, issues and processes that necessitate further engagement with the APRM Secretariat.

Participants pointed out that the relationship between government and civil society is regarded with scepticism and the experience with the various government structures has been characterised by tension and suspicion. It was argued also that the goal is not the mechanism but rather a change in the relationship between civil society and government structures. These mechanisms are a means to an end there is a need for introspection within civil society about their own capacities. It was noted that it is important for civil society to have these facilities but they have to be effective and must be legitimate.

The commission also stated that if the challenge with ECOSOCC was that of information dissemination then there is a need for a communication strategy. Civil society should identify the structures that are not delivering and come up with mechanisms to capacitate these institutions.

1.1 Strength and weaknesses

The commission brainstormed on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed interface mechanism and identified key areas. It was asserted that robustness and flexibility are key to enabling the interface mechanism to ensure civil society engagement with the Pan African Institutions; the coordination ability of civil society e.g. the council of churches and trade unions, and various other formations can stand up to the challenge and are already coordinating across borders. Furthermore, civil society organisations have the ability to articulate peoples' needs, leverage resource mobilization, and marshal capacity for research and information dissemination.

Among the weaknesses identified was the fact that civil society organisations have become very much detached from the grassroots they

are supposed to be representing. Furthermore, that the conceptualisation of civil society is a problem in itself and needs urgent attention. There was agreement that there are blockages to engaging with the AU and its structures and therefore there was need for a facility that would make civil society engagement effective. The challenge was: Should the facility assume an advocacy or advisory/ service provider role?

The rationale for creating 'invented' spaces over and above 'invited' spaces for civil society interface with the Pan African Institutions was recognised and agreed upon, but participants cautioned that such 'invented' spaces need not duplicate but complement 'invited' spaces.

The Pan African Parliament agreed to the creation of an internal mechanism for engagement with civil society and this opportunity must be taken up by civil society to work with officials of the Pan African Parliament to realise this objective. The NEPAD Secretariat has already opened up space for civil society engagement however, civil society have not optimally utilized this space hence the need for an interface mechanism to assist civil society in this engagement.

1.2 Recommendations

1. It was recommended that a task team be established to guide the work with the Pan African Parliament in facilitating civil society engagement with the AU and other continental structures. This was important in order to build confidence with the institutions civil society want to work with.
2. Although there is agreement on the Midrand based civil society interface mechanism with the Pan African Parliament, it is recommended that there must be coordination and connection to Addis Ababa based interface mechanisms.
3. The proposal on the Midrand Interface Mechanism has a number of grey areas which require clarification and elaboration before implementation could start. The establishment process must initially focus on developing operational modalities such as guidelines, principles, etc.

A substantial amount of aid resources flow back to international organisations in the form of tied aid and in the recipient countries the usual suspects get lion's share while little flows to community based organisations.

4. The proposed interface mechanism should be structured such that it is not influenced by international organizations in order for them to be more effective with regional structures. It must accommodate and capacitate smaller civil society organisations.

in order to effectively participate in the aid effectiveness debate. There is a need for capacity building in the debt and aid field among civil society organisations. The analytical capacity of civil society must be deepened and broadened which is crucial for getting involved in development finance flows particularly aid.

2. Commission 2: Civil society and aid effectiveness

The commission focused on aid effectiveness debate and its implication for civil society with the aim of identifying key issues for Ghana 2008. It considered key lessons from past civil society work on aid effectiveness and highlighted some issues for consideration by civil society including issues of capacity building to actively involve civil society in the debate on aid effectiveness. This will enable civil society to play a meaningful role in the implementation of the Paris Declaration, participate in aid negotiations rather than leaving it to governments and donor community. It is important for civil society to participate in setting country priorities and monitoring and evaluation framework in order to hold both governments and donor community responsible. There were some concerns that the Paris Declaration is not working and that there is lack of co-ordination among Africans leading to limited monitoring and engagement by civil society both in governments and in the donor community.

Participants felt that civil society need to be aware of the debates around the aid regime

A substantial amount of aid resources flow back to international organisations in the form of tied aid and in the recipient countries the usual suspects get lion's share while little flows to community based organisations. The absence of a strategic approach in the donor community clearly influences whether aid flows to NGOs or CBOs. The donor community is increasingly adopting a sectoral approach to aid disbursement which results to aid competition between sectors, e.g. health competing with education sector for limited aid resources.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers which are the main instrument for channelling donor aid to poor countries have ideological underpinnings and civil society need to understand such issues in order to effectively engage governments and the donor community. Aid conditionalities around policy result have a tendency to distort national development priorities as aid dependent countries are unable to stand up against donor imposed conditionalities. However, where countries are less dependent on aid flows e.g. SA's reliance on donor aid is very low and enables the country to stand up to donors.

Civil society has a role to play in deepening accountability by government and donor community. However, it is important for civil society to raise issues of ownership of country development policies through participation of all stakeholders and not just government and donors. Joint country aid strategies need civil society involvement which must engage and define what they want to see in an aid policy and also articulate the interests and concerns of the ordinary citizens.

It was observed that civil society organisations are working individually—chasing donor money and are driven by donor priorities. However, In Southern Africa a consultative framework for sub-regional implementation of the Paris Declaration has been developed in which civil society participated. Therefore, civil society in SADC needs to look at thematic groups in the Windhoek Declaration and formulate a strategy on engaging the governments and the donor community about aid flows in the sub-region.

2.1. Recommendations for policy influencing interventions in the aid effectiveness debate from a civil society perspective and key issues for Ghana 2008

1. It was recommended that the role of civil society in the aid effectiveness debate must be redefined in order to foster greater accountability. Governments and the donor community need to be engaged in defining a space for civil society engagement in aid effectiveness.
2. Equally important is the need for civil society itself to identify where to aim and what to target in order to influence the processes – should it be participation or ownership?
3. There was agreement that direct funds must be channelled through intermediary organisations especially from recipient countries in order to reach out to community based and other grassroots organisations.
4. Civil society need to be involved in shaping policy and technical space for finance ministries which will ensure that economic governance is democratised and takes into

account policy alternatives with input from all stakeholders. In order to be involved in economic policy formulation civil society must be proactive and able to articulate to policy priorities.

5. There was recognition of South Africa's participatory budget process which may provide an example of best practices for civil society to make it a reference point and to recommend for emulation by other countries where such processes are not common.
6. There is a need to streamline report back in order to free time to focus on real work around development. Report back by countries is still time and resource consuming.
7. Civil society is fragmented and this weakens its lobbying capacity with governments as well as with the donor community. There is a need to address such fragmentation and define a common agenda or areas of common interest which will enable civil society to speak with one voice.

3. Commission 1: The millennium campaign in Africa

The commission focused on the lessons learnt so far and stressed that unless there is movement in global architecture in areas of debt, trade and aid there is little chance that Africa will achieve the millennium development goals (MDGs) by 2015.

It was observed that most civil society organisations in Africa focus on largely on aid as if it were separate from trade and other issues. It is therefore important for civil society to broaden the agenda and develop capacity to engage in trade, debt and other issues that directly impacting on the ability for Africa to achieve the MDGs by the set date. There was recognition that usual protests on certain significant dates won't deliver change in terms of policy or global architecture. It is important to engage continuously using all means including dialoguing, lobbying, and other methods of conveying civil society messages.

Participants felt that the year 2007 is an important date for taking stock and assessing progress towards achieving MDGs. There needs to be further scrutiny on accountability of governments as well as the donor community and civil society needs to demand such accountability.

Citizens must be mobilised to ensure that African government budgets are in line with the objective of achieving MDGs by 2015. African civil society must ensure that there is intensified global action i.e. including northern civil society and other campaigners in support of the achievement of the MDGs by 2015. Citizens must be aware of problems and issues on economic development so that they can make effective demands from governments but also to be able to address systemic issues that affect developmental agenda and not consider them in isolation. As it was mentioned in the other commission, there is a belief that aid has the potential to distort development priorities in the recipient countries and the processes by which citizens engage in the development priority setting.

Participants suggested that there is a perception that people regard MDGs as external or foreign and therefore there must be an attempt at internalising them and making ordinary citizens understand what they are. However, the process of localising MDGs is extremely hard and requires that stakeholders unlock knowledge and equip ordinary people with necessary skills to understand the issues and their implications. There is role for civil society to play in internalising MDGs but may require capacity development to improve the quality of evidence based research which can better inform policy formulation and engagement.

3.1. Recommendations

1. It is important to encourage grass roots and local activism in the campaign in support of the MDGs to enable bottom up approaches.

2. Civil society must work to confront and transform the attitude of politicians in order to ensure political willingness and to involve the masses in all activities to ensure inclusiveness.
3. There must be a conscious strategy of identifying and choosing strong partners who are already involved to work with e.g. in budgetary processes, collaboration in other policy influencing activities, etc.
4. MDGs should not be seen as a window for further funding by recipient governments but as a window of opportunities for development.
5. Efforts should be made to involve parliamentarians in monitoring the implementation of the country's development policies including the MDGs
6. There should be a holistic approach to development including addressing poverty and not a piece meal approach.

4. Commission 2: The African Union Summit July 2007 and the proposal on the African Union Government

The commission looked at the proposal on the African Union Government with a view to formulate civil society input into the debate particularly to influence the African Union Summit which is scheduled for July 2007 in Accra, Ghana.

It considered how the proposed African Union Government can enhance the following: Active Citizenship, Institutional Effectiveness, Protection of Civilians, Democratic Governance and Shared Economic Growth? In this respect key challenges and threats were identified in terms of these five areas as shown in **Table 1** on page 18. *There was recognition that nation states are no longer viable economically in the light of globalisation, political balkanisation and economic fragmentation of the African continent.* Integration and cooperation provides new opportunities to create new

Integration and cooperation provides new opportunities to create new resources and revenue and hence development. Lack of political will delays the implementation of decisions and there is a need to strengthen the existing dysfunctional structures first before embarking on creating new ones.

resources and revenue and hence development. Lack of political will delays the implementation of decisions and there is a need to strengthen the existing dysfunctional structures first before embarking on creating new ones.

The process of integrating the African continent must fully involve its citizens. Awareness of fundamental rights by citizens is critical for a continental constitution. In this regard, it is not clear whether the proposed African Union Government will entail that a new constitution be drafted? Facts indicate that no new constitution will be drafted instead there is a call to repeal the current Constitutive Act. The African Union needs to deal openly and candidly

with the democratic deficit in the continent and any meaningful progress towards continental integration cannot avoid this issue.

If continental integration is a serious objective, then countries need to be serious about policy harmonization and adequate resources must be identified for the current structures to implement the continental integration agenda. Considering that the debate on the continental government is taking shape, there is a need to chart a civil society position as well as address the time frame and public mandate issues. Also it will be important to simplify issues so that grassroots organisations can understand and participate in the discussions.

Table 1: Challenges and threats of the proposed AU Government

Areas	Active Citizenship	Institutional Effectiveness	Protection of civilians	Democratic governance	Shared Economic Growth
Challenges and Opportunities	<p>Africa without borders/ harmonised visa process</p> <p>Harmonisation of the African citizens and active citizenship</p> <p>Free movement across the continent</p> <p>Increased opportunities for working together as common citizens</p> <p>Higher opportunity for a common purpose to be internationalised</p>	<p>Greater peer review</p> <p>Opportunity for increased integration therefore fewer dictatorships</p>	<p>Help with the protection of civilians</p>	<p>Good governance</p> <p>Accelerate the legislation-making powers PAP</p> <p>Good practices will have higher chance</p> <p>Increased advocacy aligned to continental and national standards</p> <p>Could set rules for abidance by all</p> <p>Enhanced democratic governance and human rights</p> <p>Good practices will have high chance of being replicated</p>	<p>Stronger economic and financial muscle</p> <p>Streamline African resources that will help in improving the standards of living of Africans</p> <p>Deeper economic integration and cooperation</p> <p>Africa having one negotiating block/position in relation to trade, aid and commerce industry</p> <p>Create new financial resources, tax airline tickets, tax insurance policies</p> <p>Mutual accountability among national governments</p> <p>Strengthen decisions and approaches on key economic challenges and positions e.g. china, EU, EPAS and WTO agreements</p>
Risks and Threats	<p>Disconnectedness or disillusioned from the peoples of Africa- it is arrangement between states and not peoples</p> <p>States owned process</p> <p>Delay in reaching consensus and lack of political will</p> <p>Dominance of strong economies</p> <p>No clear avenues for participation</p> <p>Illiteracy</p> <p>Lack of infrastructure and communication mechanisms.</p> <p>Who wants this continental government? Who is pushing it?</p> <p>Different traditions and practices</p>	<p>Where do they get the resources... shall governments be an industry</p> <p>AU dysfunctionality will be passed on to the African government</p> <p>Lack of political Will</p> <p>More structures to be engaged without fully functioning existing structures.</p> <p>Modalities for citizen engagement further confused/ stretched</p> <p>Lose focus on the initiatives already begun by the AU and NEPAD</p>	<p>Dominance of military threatened</p> <p>Instability</p>	<p>Immediate formulation will not accentuate democratic governance</p> <p>Translation of participation not clearly put across national, regional and continental government processes</p> <p>Heterogeneity on the continent can pose as a huge obstacle to gaining consensus among countries even on broad issues.</p>	<p>Continual financial dependency</p> <p>Huge economic imbalances</p> <p>Dominance of big economies in the Affairs of the Union Government</p> <p>Current economic paradigm or the interest of stronger economies may dominate.</p> <p>Dilution of national citizenship</p>

The commission proposed a civil society strategy that would capture the imagination of the African people in defining the African union/identity/aspirations and propose what a United Africa would look or be like.

4.1. Proposed Actions

1. It is important that wider or multiple identities continue to exist and the pan African government must not lose such identities (national and tribal).
2. The continental integration must be a people driven process in the real sense with consultations of people in all the stages and therefore popular mobilisation is critical.
3. It is important to strengthen the current dysfunctional structures and not to create new ones to replace them.
4. Civil society must create more opportunities where people can contribute to the African Union Government debate.
5. Citizens must be aware of their rights in order to meaningfully contribute to and participate actively in the debate on the African Union Government.
6. There should be a thorough analysis of alternative practical ways of funding the initiative: the African integration initiative otherwise will remain illusive.
7. Governments needs deal to candidly with democratic values and inspire confidence in the African people that they subscribe to these values.
8. There is need for clarity on how the African Union Government is going to be structured or governed? Will there be a 3-year rotational presidency or something else?
9. There should be clear timeframes for harmonisation of regional policies and alignment of national laws to regional instruments
10. The integration of the continent will require strong Pan African Institutions and mechanisms to drive the initiative.

4.2. Civic Society Strategy

The commission proposed a civil society strategy that would capture the imagination of the African people in defining the African union/identity/aspirations and propose what a United Africa would look or be like. The strategy will involve carrying out consultation with the African people which should be supported by states; advocate for an African citizenship; and developing a joint submission of civil society to the Pan African Parliament which will debate the issue on 12 May 2007. Also taking advantage of the meeting of African Ministers of Foreign Affairs taking place on 8-9 May 2007 in Durban civil society can make a press statement on the issue in order to encourage popular participation on the grand debate.

Maurice, Janah, Ezra and Bheki volunteered to write a submission to the Pan African Parliament debate on the African Union Government on 12 May 2007. The submission is attached as **annexure 1.**

Way Forward

In his closing remarks Neville Gabriel of the Southern Africa Trust indicated that they would have liked more civil society representatives to attend this meeting and highlighted the need for those present to meet the aspirations of those who did not have this privilege. He added that delegates should not betray those absent in the deliberations. He expressed his hope that this process would be a small contribution to the Pan African agenda and will create linkages between civil society and the relevant institutions.

On other matters he reiterated that the Southern Africa Trust is committed to the implementation of the proposed interface mechanism based in Midrand; promised that a task force will be established in consultation with the Advisory Group to work with the officials of the Pan African Parliament; assured that a civil society submission to the Pan African Parliament on the African Union Government will be pursued as agreed; confirmed that the Southern African Trust is committed to supporting millennium campaign initiative by working with Civicus and in collaboration with other civil society organisations and intergovernmental organisations; and that on aid effectiveness the Southern Africa Trust will monitor trends and shifts and analyse what these mean for civil society as a sector.

Annexure 1:

Submission from Civil Society Organisations to the Pan African Parliament on the Proposal for Continental Government, 14 May 2007, Gallagher Estate, Midrand, South Africa

Thirty-five African and international civil society organisations working in over forty African countries participated in the first Consultative Dialogue with the Pan Africa Parliament under the theme "Building Effective Mechanisms for Civil Society Engagement with Pan African and Regional Institutions".

Aware of the 7th ordinary session of the Pan African Parliament being held under the theme of "African Union Government", the Consultative Dialogue provided an opportunity for civil society organisations to reflect on the proposal on the Union Government in preparation for the African Union Summit in June 2007 in Accra, Ghana.

After carefully studying the Study for the Proposal for Continental Government and the Study into the Modalities for Continental Government, it is clear that without the full involvement and participation of African women and men, the vision of a Peoples Union will not be realised. In this regard, the Pan African Parliament could play a pivotal role in catalysing informed dialogue at both continental and national levels.

Consequently, we hereby recommend to Honourable Members of the Pan African Parliament that they consider including in their position on Continental Government, the following seven points;

1. Support the vision of deeper political and economic continental integration under-

pinned by the principles of democracy and rights based governance

2. A commitment to inform their National Assemblies and convene public consultations before the July Summit
3. Prioritisation in the work of the Pan African Parliament committees, the national implementation of continental legal instruments and policies;
4. A proposal to the Heads of States in July for clear consultation mechanisms for African citizens prior to all of the decision-making stages of the Continental Government;
5. A clear call to the Heads of States to immediately abolish visas for Africans travelling within Africa, as a precursor to the lifting of all restrictions on African men and women to reside, work and trade throughout Africa;
6. A further call for a clear domestic financing strategy for the proposed new functions, which may include the options of taxing air flights and other creative ways of raising revenue for the Union Government and lastly;
7. The need for increased speed in rationalising the regional economic communities so that they can become effective building blocs for continental integration.

While institutional renewal and consultation within the African Union and its Specialised Organs is important, the immense political will needed to realise political and economic integration will only be sustained if our peoples are informed and supportive of such efforts. A public mandate is necessary for Continental Government to succeed.

We urge members of the Pan African Parliament, in true recognition of their representative role, to champion this process. Lastly, we assure the Pan African Parliament of our commitment to sustain the dialogue through regular submissions and interaction.

Signed by participants from the following organisations who attended the Consultative Dialogue with the Pan African Parliament;

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 ACORD
 Africa Institute of South Africa
 African Civil Society Organisation ACSO
 African Forum for Debt and Development – AFRODAD
 AFRIMAP
 Centre for Policy Studies
 Centre for Public Participation
 CIVICUS - World Alliance for Citizen Participation
 Golden Centre of Learning
 Civil Society Trade Network of Zambia
 Denis Hurley Peace Institute
 Economic Justice Network
 Electoral Institute for Southern Africa
 G20 – Platform for Civil Society Organisations - Mozambique

Institute for Democracy in South Africa
 Institute for Democratic Governance - Ghana
 Institute for Global Dialogue
 Institute for Policy Studies
 Mwelekeo wa NGO - MWENGO
 Oxfam GB
 SADC-Council of Non Governmental Organizations SADC-CNGO
 Southern Africa Trust
 Southern African Regional Poverty Network -SARPN
 Southern African Research and Documentation Centre - SARDC
 Electoral Institute for Southern Africa
 Southern African Trade Union Co-ordination Council -SATUCC
 The Centre for Multiparty Democracy - Kenya
 Trust Africa,
 UN Millennium Campaign
 University of KwaZulu-Natal- Centre for Civil Society – CCS

The Statement has been also endorsed by

ActionAid International
 Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition
 Send Foundation – Ghana
 Pan African Movement
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Annexure 2: *List of Participants*

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