

ACP/28/031/06 Final
*Department of Political Affairs
and Human Development*

Brussels, 21 April 2006

**BRUSSELS DECLARATION OF
THE 2ND ACP CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM**

Held in Brussels, Belgium from 19 to 21 April 2006

ACP HOUSE

Brussels Declaration of the 2nd ACP Civil Society Forum

I. Preamble:

We, the Civil Society Representatives of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, meeting in Brussels during the period 19 - 21 April 2006, with the clear objective to promote and enhance the role of Non-State Actors (NSAs) within the framework of the Cotonou Agreement,

1. **Noting** that the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement signed in Cotonou on the 23 June 2000, acknowledges the complementary role of, and the potential for contributions by Non-State Actors (NSAs) to the development process as captured in Chapter 2, Article 4;
2. **Recognising** the Agreement's commitment to consult NSAs in areas relating to political dialogue and development cooperation policies and strategies;
3. **Noting** that provisions for financial resources, in accordance with the Cotonou Agreement, need to be made to enable the consultations to take place;
4. **Reiterating** the Agreement's support for capacity building of NSAs, in particular in areas relating to their organization, representation and involvement in national, regional and all-ACP consultation mechanisms;
5. **Noting** that the Cotonou Agreement aims to promote the economic, cultural and social development of ACP States, whilst contributing to the promotion of peace, security, and a stable, democratic political environment;
6. **Recalling** that Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement supports the association of civil society organizations in a balanced, regular and comprehensive political dialogue between all actors of the Partnership;
7. **Acknowledging** that a sustained strategic collaboration is required from the Cotonou Agreement partners if the role of the NSAs is to be promoted in development cooperation programmes;
8. **Acknowledging** also the recommendations of the 1st ACP Civil Society Forum, which took place during 2001, including the agreement to establish, formalize and strengthen Civil Society Forums at national, regional and all-ACP levels;

9. **Noting** that in keeping with the foregoing, an ACP Civil Society Forum has been established and is duly registered under Belgian law;
10. **Having** regard to the global objectives of the Nadi Declaration (2002) and the Maputo Declaration (2004) of the ACP Heads of State and Government, which recognize the complementary role of NSAs in contributing to the development of ACP States;
11. **Acknowledging** the importance to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);
12. **Emphasizing** that Civil Society Organizations in particular, in all its forms according to national characteristics, require special capacity-building support from EDF resources at the national, regional and all-ACP levels, if they are to address the requirements of their members, who are often representative of the most vulnerable sectors of ACP States;
13. **Acknowledging** the ACP Group's initiative in 2003 to develop an Eligibility Criteria for NSAs access to EDF resources at the national and regional levels;
14. **Recalling** that the Eligibility Criteria for NSAs provide general guidelines on the creation of national and regional Steering Committees to take the final decision on access to EDF funding;
15. **Noting** that the increasing prevalence of HIV/AIDS in ACP States significantly cripples human capital and reverses developmental gains;
16. **Reaffirming** our commitment to the principles enshrined in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity;
17. **Noting** in the Dakar Declaration on the Promotion of ACP Cultures and Cultural Industries (2003) the focus upon NSAs, which encourage ACP States, in consultation with NSAs, to develop and implement national, and regional cultural policies and legislation to promote ACP Cultural heritage;
18. **Reiterating** the importance of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) to be instruments of development that consolidate and promote regional integration, and ensure that ACP States are gradually integrated into the multilateral trading system;
19. **Observing** that EPAs are currently currently being negotiated purely as trade agreements without account being taken of the development goals of the ACP countries;

20. **Noting** that efforts to continue with the EPAs negotiations in its present form, must take cognizance of the provision of financial resources to facilitate the participation of representatives of national and regional Civil Society Organizations;
21. **Noting** that specific provisions have been made for the participation of NSAs in the ACP-EU Energy, ACP-EU Water, and the ACP-EU Natural Disaster Facilities;
22. **Observing** that whilst the sharing of knowledge in the spheres of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) will be the key tool for growth and development in the modern era, the majority of NSAs are unable to take advantage of this technological development;
23. **Acknowledging** that the promotion of ICT development in ACP States will significantly contribute to the Cotonou Agreement's global objective to improve the institutional framework for the social inclusion of NSAs;
24. **Highlighting** that ACP NSAs Organizations, due to their rich diversity, possess a vast knowledge of the importance to protect the environment, natural, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, including languages, knowledge and values in ACP States and regions;
25. **Demanding** that species of medicinal plants are protected and recommending the promotion of local pharmaceutical industries; and
26. **Encouraging** the continued promotion of state and non-state policy dialogue at the all-ACP levels.

Hereby declare the following positions of the **2nd ACP Civil Society Forum**, relating to:

II. Non-State Actor participation in the ACP-EU Natural Disaster Facility, ACP-EU Water Facility, and ACP-EU Energy Facility

1. **Call** upon the ACP Group and the European Union to adopt a holistic and participatory approach in the administration of the ACP-EU Natural Disaster Facility (NDF) to address the challenges of disaster risk reduction and management, through the promotion of policy dialogue between ACP States, the private sector and Civil Society;

2. **Urge** that appropriate measures are taken to build capacity of NSAs that will encourage an active policy discourse with the public, private sector, non-government organizations, and community based regional and international actors;
3. **Emphasize** that the reinforcement of ACP NSAs capacity will assist their active participation in the communication of messages of disaster preparedness and rehabilitation to local grassroots and Civil Society organizations at the national, regional and all-ACP levels;
4. **Underline** the importance to promote NSAs involvement in educational programmes that are acknowledged to be cost-effective, promote a culture of safety and involve the use of indigenous knowledge to protect people, habitats, livelihoods and cultural heritage from natural hazards;
5. **Urge** NSAs, in light of their good performance in the first Call for Proposals, to fully participate in the second round of Call for Proposals of the ACP-EU Water Facility, launched on 31 March 2006; and
6. **Encourage** NSAs to participate fully in the Call for Proposals for the ACP-EU Energy Facility, scheduled to be launched during June 2006.

III. Non-State Actor participation in the fight against HIV/AIDS

1. **Underscore** the need to build NSAs capacity to enable an active participation in reproductive health programmes and the fight against HIV/AIDS, in particular in the areas of pre-natal and post-natal care, safe delivery care, child survival and development services, family planning services, counselling, prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, particularly amongst the youth;
2. **Encourage** an increased involvement of NSAs in promoting behavioural change, communication and services at the community, national, regional and all-ACP levels in all areas relating to Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) risks amongst the population; and
3. **Reiterate** the continued promotion of NSAs involvement, under the 10th EDF, in capacity development programs that aim to improve the logistic, technical and managerial skills of personnel and community members involved in the promotion of SRH and the fight against HIV/AIDS.

IV. Non-State Actor participation in the promotion of Human Rights and Democratic Processes

1. **Emphasize** that effective participation of NSAs is an indispensable and necessary condition to develop and entrench respect for fundamental human rights in the democratic process;
2. **Call** on ACP States to strengthen institutionalized cooperation mechanisms with NSAs, in accordance with the spirit of Article 19 of the Cotonou Agreement, as a means of promoting democracy in the ownership of development policy and cooperation strategies with the EU;
3. **Reiterate** that all rights are indivisible and universal, and therefore **call** for the inclusion of economic, social, environment, and cultural rights to be integral parts of ACP-EU cooperation; and
4. **Reaffirm** that NSAs are to continue their engagement and policy dialogue with Governments of ACP States and the European Commission.

V. Non-State Actor participation in the EPA Negotiations

1. **Call** for the provision of financial resources to facilitate those representatives of national, regional and all-ACP Civil Society Organisations;
2. **Emphasize** that all NSAs Organizations are to be routinely informed, consulted and allowed to express their views on the promotion of long-term development priorities throughout the course of the EPA negotiations;
3. **Call** on the Governments of ACP States to explore the option of alternative trade arrangements to EPAs in accordance with the provisions of Article 37.6 of the Cotonou Agreement; and
4. **Reiterate** that EPA negotiations are to be transparent and tools of development to address, *inter alia*, the specific requirements of NSAs.

VI. Non-State Actor participation in ACP-EU Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) Development Cooperation Programmes

1. **Urge** the ACP States to recognize ICT's positive role in enhancing a culture of participatory democracy, and to develop the administrative capacity required to deliver public services and basic needs to NSA representatives;
2. **Encourage** the consolidation of ICT programmes that support rural development and productivity, by facilitating solution sharing between local communities, providing access to practical information on financial services, small business accounting, weather trends and best practices in agriculture;
3. **Reaffirm** the fundamental importance of developing national and regional strategies, including cultural policies to enhance the utilization of ICTs in ACP States; and
4. **Improve** access to ICTs for NSAs, particularly for community-based Civil Society Organizations in the most disadvantaged areas, and **urge** ACP States to support and promote the concept of digital solidarity.

VII. Non-State Actor participation in the promotion of Cultural Industries

1. **Encourage** ACP States and their development partners to promote favourable mechanisms for ACP cultural operators to access financing under the 9th and 10th EDF; and
2. **Call** for the provision of financial assistance for the preservation and protection of intellectual property rights of ACP cultural heritage and industries.

VIII. Support for ACP Civil Society Fora

1. **Encourage** NSA structures, in particular the ACP Civil Society Forum, to initiate and organize future meetings in collaboration with the ACP Secretariat, in order to promote inclusiveness;
2. **Emphasize** that sufficient time should be allocated for NSA consultations at the national and regional levels, prior to consultations at the all-ACP level; and

3. **Call** for the provision of financial assistance to strengthen ACP Civil Society Platforms at national, regional and all-ACP levels.

IX. Final Provisions

1. **Undertake** to promote, distribute and implement this Brussels Declaration and Plan of Action on the aforementioned issues;
2. **Request** the ACP Ministers of Finance, ACP and EU Councils of Ministers to reaffirm a commitment to provide access up to 15% of EDF resources for NSAs, which will contribute to the disbursement of funds in a timely manner;
3. **Appeal** to ACP States, EU and the joint ACP-EU institutions, in collaboration with our partners and financial institutions for development at national, regional, all-ACP and international level, to support, follow-up and participate in the implementation of the Brussels Declaration and Plan of Action of the 2nd ACP Civil Society Forum; and
4. **Request** the Chairperson of the Meeting of the 2nd ACP Civil Society Forum, in collaboration with the Chairperson of the ACP Committee of Ambassadors and the Secretary-General of the ACP Group, to forward this Declaration and Plan of Action to the Chairperson of the next Meeting of ACP Ministers of Finance, Presidents of the ACP Council of Ministers, EU Council of Ministers, and European Commission, Co-Presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, Heads of the ACP Regional Integration Organisations, ACP Media and relevant bi- and multilateral partners.

Brussels, 21 April, 2006

For the 2nd ACP Civil Society Forum

Chairperson

**Mr. Lucien TAPE MAMBO
President
Union of NGOs of Côte d'Ivoire**

