

PRESS RELEASE

From the APF Venue

Japan, 7 April 2008
17:24

African and Japanese Civil Society speak to the Africa Partnership Forum in One Voice

Civil society participants from Africa and Japan attending the 10th Meeting of the African Partnership Forum (APF) in Tokyo have committed themselves to organise and monitor the African development process with a view to holding international development partners and African governments to account in order to create a peaceful, progressive, democratic and prosperous continent

The civil society participants urged the APF members attending the meeting which was the themed “*Making a Vibrant Africa a Reality through TICAD IV and G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit*” to take the African continent in the away from the pains and challenges that characterised the continent’s past. They urged the APF not to lose focus in achieving the MDGs in Africa and Africans international partners use the opportunity to “listen more, to understand more and to learn how best to support African people as they take ownership of their own development process”.

The civil society participants recognised all the positive developments in Africa such as economic growth and increasing democracy. They expressed hope that the APF, the forthcoming TICAD IV and G8 Summit can be platforms for greater partnership and more effective action in addressing Africa’s challenges. They, however, stated that greater commitment from governments both in Africa and other developed countries would be needed for this to happen. They recommended the following:

- a. More urgent attention to be paid to issues of good governance, ensuring that the electoral processes are less volatile, free and fair.
- b. The international community and development partners to ensure that African constitutions are safeguarded from modification, especially regarding the elongation of the terms of incumbent governments.
- c. Refocus attention on establishing the MDGS as the focal point for poverty reduction and human development in Africa.
- d. Mainstream pro-poor growth in all development processes.
- e. Ensure that adequate and predictable funds are provided for activities that will boost economic development e.g. investing in SME, providing micro and macro finance etc.
- f. Pay more attention to the informal economy as well as agriculture as these represent the bulk of Africa’s ‘real’ economy
- g. Remove the trade barriers and subsidies that continue to stifle and strangle the profits of African agricultural producers.
- h. Invest more in infrastructure and Information Communication Technology to increase the quality of life and economic activities of the rural people, especially women.
- i. Provide finance for supporting adaptation separate from and in addition to the already-existing commitments for ODA. Funds should be responsive to the diverse needs at the grass roots level – accessible to civil society partners.
- j. Ensure that development partners in the richer nations keep the promises they made at the Gleneagles G8 summit to scale up aid.
- k. At all levels, civil society participation, especially grassroots community based organisations should be ensured if the voices and concerns of the people are to be reflected in efforts to tackle poverty and promote pro-poor economic growth.
- l. Strengthen collaboration and partnership between African and Japanese civil society.

Apart from all the above, the civil society would also like to stress the importance of addressing the plight of African women as they remain the key to ensuring economic growth, reducing poverty, peace and security and good governance. The group would like to see a greater participation of women in the political, economic and social

spheres in a manner that removes the burden that they carry and empowers them to unlock their potential for political, economic and social leadership. Bineta Diop, who chaired the African Civil Society APF Technical Committee, said “we will now work to ensure that the issue of gender stays on the agenda”.

Lastly, the civil society called upon the leaders to recognise that structured civil society participation should become an integral part of the G8 and APF processes. The group asked the leaders to acknowledge that the civil society comes to the table with technical, contextual and practical knowledge that can help to achieve the goals of the APF. 'Dapo Oyewole, the Focal Point for African civil society input at the APF said “we will continue to engage APF members to ensure that the voices and concerns of civil society are heard as our leaders make decisions about our future”. The African civil society participants said they were willing to work with the leaders to achieve the goals of the APF but reiterated that they would maintain their independence in the APF process.

- END -

For further information contact:

'**Dapo Oyewole**, Focal Point for African civil society

Masaki Inaba, Focal Point for Japanese civil society (2008 G8 Summit NGO Forum)_

Toko Tomita, Focal Point for Japanese civil society (TICAD IV-NGO Network)