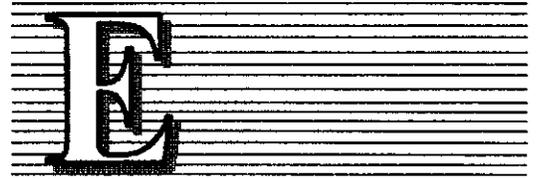




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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

First Meeting of the Committee on
Human Development and Civil Society

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
21-23 June 1999

**REPORT ON
UNECA-CSO CONSULTATION ON THE OPERATION AND
MANAGEMENT OF THE AFRICAN CENTRE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY
(ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, 5 - 6 APRIL 1999)**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) organized a two day consultation meeting with representatives of the African civil society community on 5-6 April 1999 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa. The consultation was hosted by the Development Management Division and was attended by a cross-section of the African CSO community, UN agencies and by senior staff of UNECA. (See Annex I: List of participants). The broad objectives of the consultation was to clarify the institutional arrangement of the newly established African Centre for Civil Society (ACCS) and fashion a new partnership between the civil society community and UNECA in the operation, management and governance of the Centre.

2. Mrs. Lalla Ben Barka, Deputy Executive Secretary of UNECA, officially opened the meeting. After welcoming participants to the UNCC, she gave a brief overview of the historical background of the idea behind the establishment of the Centre, citing the 1990 Arusha Conference and the recommendations that followed the Conference as the origin of the idea and the basis on which the Centre came into existence. The Deputy Executive Secretary stressed the importance her organization attaches to the existing partnership between the civil society community and UNECA. She hoped that the establishment of the Centre will further strengthen the relationship between ECA and the civil society community. She cited the following as possible areas of collaboration between the Centre and the African civil society community.

- ◆ institutional development and capacity building of African civil society organization;
- ◆ dialogue and co-operation between African governments and civil society organizations with the aim of creating an enabling environment conducive to the growth and participation of CSOs and NGOs ; and
- ◆ building the capacities of African civil society organizations for preventing conflicts, resolving disputes peacefully, and strengthening peaceful and pluralistic democracies.

3. The Deputy Secretary also outlined the broad objectives and expected output of the UNECA-CSO consultation indicating the specific objectives as:

- ◆ To consider the preferred institutional framework for the Centre's operations;
- ◆ To reach a consensus on modalities for the participation of African civil society in the Centre's governance, programming and activities taking into account ongoing actions to establish a committee on Human Development and civil society approved by the ECA Conference of Ministers; and
- ◆ To agree on the future process which will ensure continuous CSOs participation in ACCS activities

4. Ms. Ben Barka concluded her remarks by underscoring the fact that the views and recommendations, which will emerge from the in-depth considerations of these issues, that have been put before the participants, will make a significant contribution toward making the Centre a success. She thanked the participants for attending the consultation and wished them a fruitful deliberation.

5. Professor Edward Oyugi, of the Social Development Network, responded to the welcoming speech of the Deputy Secretary. On behalf of the participants of the conference, he expressed his appreciation for the initiatives ECA has taken to bring the CSO community to consult on the operating, governance and management of the Centre. He hoped that the Centre would enhance the capacities of governments and civil society communities in the areas of policy dispensation. In particular, he emphasized the role the Centre could play in improving and strengthening government – CSO relationships.

6. Following Professor Oyugi's remark, Mr. Abdul Mohammed, Director of Inter Africa Group, welcomed participants on behalf of the Ethiopian civil society community. He outlined the African CSOs history of relationship with ECA going back to the Arusha International Conference and the years between them. He said that the establishment of the Centre is the culmination of the long and collaborative relationship between the African civil society community and the UNECA. He also took a brief moment to thank Mr. Mazide Ndiaye, President of FAVDO, for his tireless effort to build and strengthen the African civil society community. Mr. Mohammed described Mr. Mazide's works as one of the early crusaders that put African CSOs on the "map". He also stressed the difficulty inherent in establishing and maintaining a relationship between institutions and called on everyone involved to be steadfast in bringing the objectives of the Centre to a reality.

7. The meeting commenced after adopting the programme of Work and the Agenda as annexed. (See Annex II).

II. THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS

8. Following the opening session, Mr. James Nxumalo, Director of the Development management Division (DMD) provided an explanation on explain on the criteria for selection of participants to the consultative meeting. The selection was on the basis of defined and observable constituency, active engagement with African development and governance agenda, proven track record of activities and expertise on issues, gender balance, geographic distribution, sectoral diversity and potential to contribute towards ACCS future development. The Director outlined the major outcomes expected from the consultation process. These were summarized as follows:

An understanding between ECA and CSO's reached on the institutional option and organizational arrangement of ACCS.

9. He indicated that ECA prefers the Centre to be located within the DMD, overseen and supervised by the Director of the Division. In collaboration with the

10. division staff, the Centre is expected to implement the programme of work of the organization pertaining to civil society development.

Modalities for CSOs participation in the activities of ACCS agreed upon.

11. ECA prefers an Advisory Board of 14-16 members, composed of a cross-section of the African civil society community. Ideally, the Board will meet once a year and advise the DMD Director and the Centre staff on such issues as: programme of work of the Centre, priority areas of intervention for the Centre, partner agencies of the Centre, fund raising strategy for the Centre's activities and future development and direction of the Centre, etc.

An action Plan for future involvement of CSOs in ACCS activities developed

12. Related to above, ECA requested participants to draw up a plan of action for the work of the Advisory Board. The programme of work will include, Terms of Reference and schedule of activities for the Advisory Board.

An interim Executive Committee constituted

13. Participants were asked to select and authorize at least an interim Executive Committee which will work with DMD in this initial period of start up. While the difficulty to fully accommodate CSO diversity and regional representation, was acknowledged participants were urged to include a cross-section of the African CSO community, covering Pan African and sub-regional, apex, umbrella, consortia and network organizations.

III. OPTIONS FOR THE OPERATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE AFRICAN CENTRE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY: THE POSITION OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Institutional options and operational arrangements

14. Dr. Getachew Demeke, Coordinator of Popular Participation in Development Project, spoke about the history of the Centre from its inception in October 1997 to date. He said that the Centre had difficulty all along in establishing itself fully within UNECA. The difficulties were basically institutional, legal and financial in nature. The Centre was initially envisioned to be an independent institution owned by the civil society community but housed within ECA. This type of institutional arrangement or relationships could not work within UN agency. The Conference of Ministers, which governs the activities of the Commission, has determined the configuration of the Commission and has decided that there will not be a new ECA-supported autonomous institution without its expressed instruction.

15. The available fund to run the Centre comes from a single source: the German Development Agency (GTZ). The fund is made available solely to ECA because it met the German financial management standards and requirements. If this fund were to be managed by another entity other than ECA it would constitute a breach of

contract that ECA entered with the German Government. For these reasons, Dr. Demeke said that the initial idea of making the Centre an independent autonomous institution had to be reconsidered. However, he stressed that ECA will still entertain innovative ideas and suggestions that would develop into a workable operating modality that would satisfy both the CSO community and the institution. He indicated that after the maturation of the Centre and once its financial sustainability is secured the Centre's independence and autonomy can be brought-up for consideration.

Proposed programme areas

16. Following the above presentation, Ms. Jennifer Kargbo, member of the Development Management Division of ECA, made a presentation on the proposed programme of work of the Centre. Her discussion was based on a background paper handed out to the participants entitled "Options for the Operation and Management of the African Centre for Civil Society (ACCS)". Her presentation highlighted the factors that influenced ECA to choose the proposed programme of work and how best it can be accomplished through the proposed option. She cited the areas that the programme of work would emphasize as capacity building of NGOs and CSO; build networks and other types of relationships within the CSO in conflict prevention, management and post conflict rebuilding activities; and strengthen ECA's capacity by incorporating CSO issues as cross-cutting theme in all the activities and works of the institution.

17. Following ECA's presentation, the chair opened the floor for comments, questions and answers. Participants pointed out that the two options presented should be viewed as stages in the development of the Centre and not necessarily as two separate and unrelated choices. Mr. Mazide Ndiaye, president of FAVDO, gave a brief overview of CSOs relations with the Centre. He noted that CSOs had maintained the view that the Centre should be an independent institution. This view emanated, at the time, from the frustration CSOs experienced at the lack of access to these major institutions to affect changes and influence events. However, these institutions are now making positive efforts to include CSOs as partners and the fact that the Centre is incorporated within ECA should not pose any problem. There were other comments from participants on the need for ECA to prioritize its works with CSOs and to focus on specific issues and to continuously consult with CSOs on all programme activities.

IV. CONSULTATION AMONG CSOS

18. The next session was devoted to consultation among CSOs about the institutional option and the participation modalities presented by ECA. After extensive discussions the participants presented the following report to the plenary. The CSOs presentation is reproduced verbatim below.

Institutional framework of ACCS

19. As a starting point for our discussions, the proposed options were studied carefully in the light of the information furnished by ECA in its earlier presentation on the options for the operation and management of the ACCS. Consensus was reached on a critical proposal by ECA to constitute an Advisory Board which will be made up largely of CSO representatives part of whose mandate will be to work jointly with ECA to develop funding proposals which are perceived to be more likely to receive more positive consideration by donors. The proposed advisory role of CSOs is considered incongruent with that of the desired involvement of CSOs in raising funds for the operations and management of the ACCS. The group does not favour the creation of an Advisory Board. A Steering Committee is a preferred arrangement. An advisory capacity will grossly limit the input that CSOs will have in the ACCS' operations and management, as the decision-making will reside solely with ECA. A more tenable position that ensures that the legitimate concerns and interests of CSOs are duly considered will be one in which CSOs have a meaningful and significant presence in a Steering Committee, whose role will be critical to the ACCS' functioning. It will, inter alia, assume a more decisive and central role in the operations and management of the ACCS.

20. What is found lacking in the proposed options is a clearly outlined strategy or a linkage between the two options – a dual phase, in effect, - that would assure a smooth transition from a sheltered ACCS, to one that is free-standing, self financing and fully owned by the CSO community.

21. If the ACCS is to serve its primary beneficiaries effectively it must be responsive to the CSOs agenda. If CSOs have to play the crucial role that ECA wants it to play (and should play) in the operations of ACCS, its programme should be defined and articulated by CSOs themselves and not by ECA. The option preferred by ECA to have the ACCS lodged within the DMD is acceptable to the CSO representatives for the legal reasons advanced and other considerations.

Programme of Work

22. It is in light of these considerations that it is deemed more expedient and realistic for the six programme interventions outlined by ECA to be condensed into two broad areas. The primary purpose and function of the ACCS should be:

Enhancing CSOs capacity to contribute to the development of new paths and vision for the continent's development. In this context:

- ◆ The roles defined for CSOs in policy decision making should be clear and unambiguous;

- ◆ ACCS should be a "wholesale" resource, acting as a clearing-house for CSOs, providing relevant and needed information, funding, documentation and conflict resolution, that would facilitate the activities of CSOs.

Interfacing with Governments and other development Actors

- ◆ ACCS should stimulate recognition of CSOs by governments by playing an advocacy role or mediating between the two where problems arise;
- ◆ ACCS should enhance dialogue and collaboration between CSOs and other development actors on key issues, by bringing these actors together as often as possible;
- ◆ ACCS should empower CSOs to build and strengthen their legitimacy themselves;
- ◆ ACCS should pay particular attention to interfacing with OAU, other continental organizations and multilateral agencies whose agendas coincide with that of CSOs, and which are desirous of establishing a meaningful partnership with CSOS.

Modality of CSO participation in ACCS

23. On the issue of where CSOs best fit in the governance of the ACCS, the consensus was that a Steering Committee, in which CSOs have a 70% representation with 30% reserved to ECA would be most ideal, and would be more reflective of the pivotal role that CSOs should assume in the operation of the Centre.

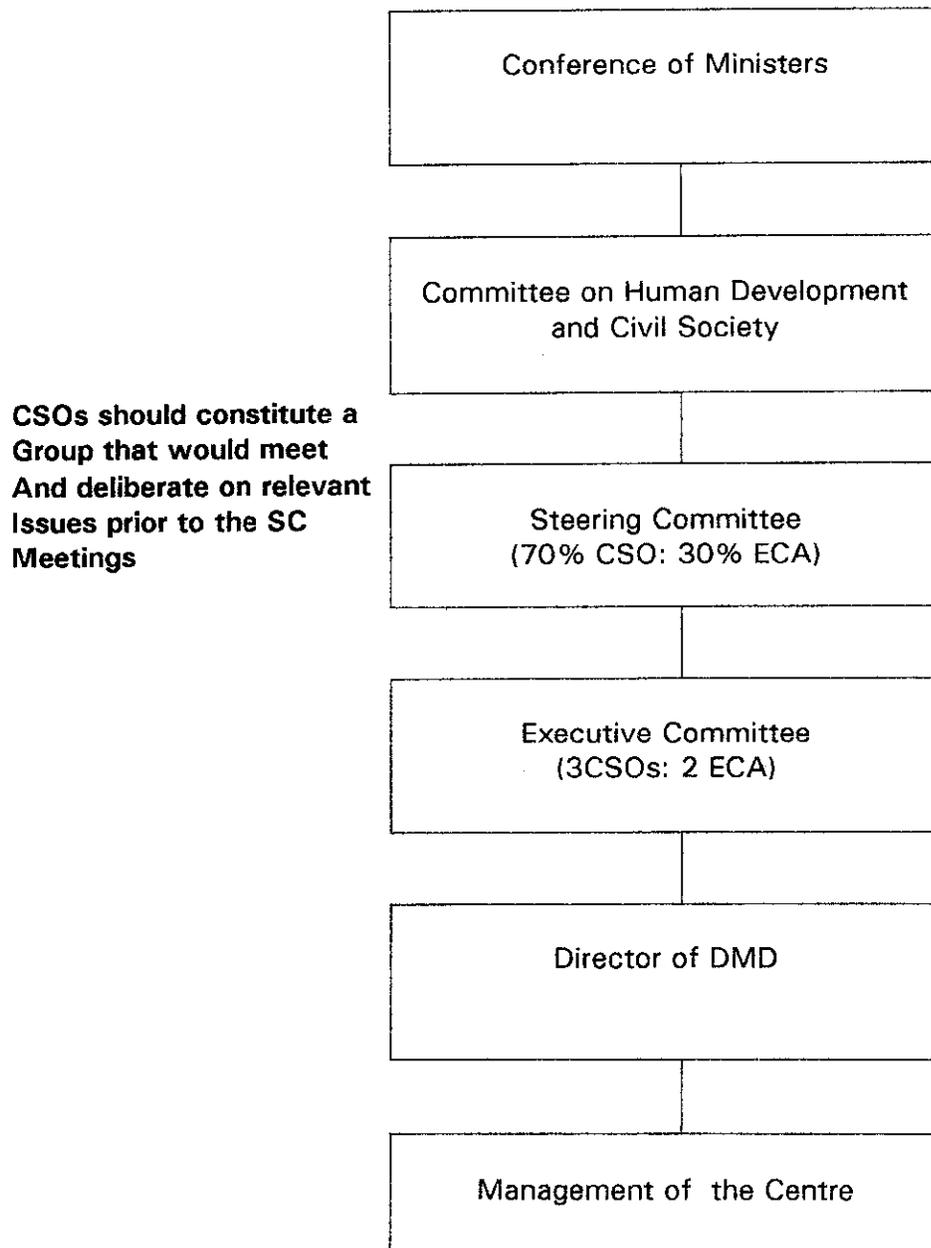
24. The Steering Committee will have the competence and authority to determine the budget distribution of the ACCS, its staffing structure and composition, and to mobilize funding required for the Centre's programmes and operations. The Committee will have a two-year mandate, and will convene twice annually. To ensure wider participation and fair representation of the broad and diverse composition of the CSO family, the initial corps of CSO representatives in this Committee will be nominated from the participants in this consultation, who will later consult with their respective constituencies to choose their substantive membership in the Committee. A system will be designed to ensure roll over in the representation of CSOs in this body.

25. The Steering Committee will decide the timetable and process of disengaging the ACCS from the guardianship of the ECA, to make it a truly CSO regulated body, managed in partnership with ECA. In the first phase, the Steering Committee will have a 5 - year life span, after which time it will assume permanency and a more appropriate title. Decisions will be made by consensus. The membership will comprise high level functionaries of CSOs and the designated representatives

Executive Secretary of ECA. A review of ACCS operation will be made within two years of its formal establishment.

26. On the issue of staffing of the ACCS, the group endorses the staff complement proposed by the ad-hoc experts group meeting in October 1998. Although the Steering Committee has the final say on how large the staff of the ACCS should be, the group supports a staff of twelve (12) comprising a Director, two Senior Programme Officers, four Programme Officers, an Information and Communications Officer, a programme Assistant, two administrative/support staff, and a Logistics Officer – if financial and material resources will allow – to make it fully functional. (A staff of twelve officers is expected to be reached in five years time).

27. The following governance structure is proposed by participants



V. ECA-CSO CONSULTATION: THE OUTCOME

28. Following the presentation of the Report by CSO participants, discussions were held mainly to provide further clarification and consensus. These included the following:

Clarifications and common understanding on:

- ◆ The nature and scope of the Steering Committee's function including its composition and its Terms of Reference.
- ◆ The formalities regarding Committee's interface with the ECA
- ◆ The nature and scope of the Executive Committee and its mandate follow-up and execute the decisions of the Steering Committee.
- ◆ Modalities for CSOs involvement in the operation and management of the Centre including Programme elaboration, fund raising, information dissemination etc....
- ◆ The need to promote the spirit of participation as the corner stone of the Centre's operating philosophy.

Interim Working Modalities

29. UNECA and participants of the consultation have agreed on the following modalities to initiate cooperation on the operation, management and governance of the Centre:

- ◆ A Steering Committee of 15 people will be selected to advise and oversee the operation, management and governance of the ACCS. The Steering Committee will be composed of 10 representatives of civil society organizations and five representatives of UNECA.
- ◆ An Executive Committee of five people will be selected to follow-up and execute decisions of the Steering Committee. The Executive Committee will be composed of 3 representatives of CSOs and two representatives of UNECA.
- ◆ The Executive Committee shall meet within 3 months of selection to develop terms of terms of the two respective committees and to work out action plan for future involvement of the committees in ACCS activities.

- ◆ DMD Director and ACCS staff will meet with the Executive Committee and review the Centre's previous activities and its proposed work programme for the 2000-2001 biennium and assess the current financial situation of the Centre.
- ◆ ECA will prepare and process all the required documents to obtain authorizations for the legal establishment of ACCS from all its legislative organs.

VI. ELECTION OF INTERIM STEERING AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES

30. CSO participants met among themselves and elected the organizations to represent the CSOs in the respective committees. These were as follows:

Organizations selected to the Steering Committee

1. Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU),
2. Development Innovation and Networks (IREN),
3. Forum of African voluntary Development Organizations (FAVDO),
4. Environmental Development Action in The Third World (ENDA),
5. Social Development Network (SND),
6. The African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD),
7. The Association of Non-Governmental Organizations of Gambia (TANGO),
8. All African Conference of Churches (AACC),
9. Mwelekeo wa NGO (MWENGO) and
10. Christian Relief Development Association of Ethiopia (CRDA)

Organizations elected to the Executive Committee

1. Mwelekeo wa NGO (MEWNGO),
2. Forum of African voluntary Development Organizations (FAVDO) and
3. Social Development Network (SND)

VII. CLOSING

31. The consultation was officially closed by Mr. K.Y. Amoako the Executive Secretary of UNECA. The Executive Secretary thanked participants for these serious deliberations and thoughtful recommendations and said that ECA is ready to work with the CSO community in building the Centre. He emphasized the need for the two communities to regularly consult on common concern and work together to make the Centre a success. He concluded his remark by noting that the consultation marks yet another process to strengthen the partnership between ECA and the civil society community.

Annex I

**UNECA - CSO Consultation on the Operation and Management of
the African Centre for Civil Society
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 5 and 6 April 1999**

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Annex I

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Annex II

**UNECA - CSO Consultation on the Operation and Management of
the African Centre for Civil Society**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 5 and 6 April 1999

PROGRAMME OF WORK

Monday 5 April 1999

09:00-10:30 Registration/House keeping

10:30-11:00 Opening ceremony

Welcome address by Mrs. Lalla Ben Barka, Deputy Executive Secretary ECA

Response by a representative of civil society organizations

Adoption of the Agenda

11:00-11:15 Coffee break

11:15-11:45 Presentation by ECA "Options for the Operation and Management of the African Centre for Civil Society"

11:45-12:30 Clarification and Elaboration on ECA's presentation (Question and answer session)

12:30-14:30 Lunch

14:30-15:30 Consultation and discussions among civil society organizations

15:30-15:45 Coffee break

Tuesday 6 April 1999

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 09:30-10:30 | Consultation on the institutional structure and position of ACCS (CSOs and ECA) |
| 10:30-11:30 | Consultation on Modality of CSO participation in the activities of ACCS (CSO and ECA) |
| 1:30-11:45 | Coffee break |
| 11:45-12:45 | Development of Action Plan for future involvement of CSOs in ACCS activities (CSOs and ECA) |
| 12:45-14:45 | Lunch |
| 14:45-15:15 | Election of an interim advisory board (CSOs) |
| 15:15-16:30 | Preparation of the consultation report (free time for participants) |
| 16:30-17:00 | Adoption of Report |
- Closing statement by Dr. K.Y. Amoako, UN Under-Secretary
General and Executive Secretary of UNECA