

The Dakar Declaration

Strengthening Citizens Voices in the Rio+20 and Post 2015 Processes

The African CSO Dialogue on preparations towards Rio+20, SDGs and Post 2015 process was held in Dakar, Senegal on May 14th, 2012 to discuss our engagement and ways to ensure citizens' voices are adequately incorporated in the process towards a new global development framework when the deadline for the MDGs ends in 2015. We also committed to strengthening the voices of the ordinary citizens --- millions of women, men, and young people in Africa --- in the process of determining the next global development framework.

The achievement of the MDGs requires accelerated and concerted effort from all, including civil society. It is evident that to date almost a billion people still go to bed hungry. In spite of recorded increases in primary school enrolment, girls, children with disabilities, children from ethnic minorities and indigenous people still do not have access to quality basic education. Another setback is the inability of gains in the health sector to practically translate into improved access to quality health care for all, especially women and children, as unacceptably high numbers of women and children still die during child birth and from other preventable diseases in Africa. Furthermore, the impact of climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation has had tremendous negative impact on the livelihoods of people especially rural women who depend on the environment as the basis for their socio-economic development and sustainable livelihoods.

Rio+20 and discussions to review and enhance the delivery of commitments to effectively and equitably deliver sustainable development are taking place at a time when Africa's economic growth is generally on the upward trend. The discovery and exploitation of natural resources has been a key factor. We however recognize the fact this growth remains inequitable, non-resilient and unsustainable and is certainly not being matched by meaningful improvements in the lives of the majority of citizens, who are meant to be the primary beneficiaries.

As African Civil Society, building on preceding consultations held in Bamako, Nairobi and Limbe towards Rio+20 and the post 2015 processes, we recommend the following:

1. The moves towards developing Sustainable Development Goals as well as the need for accelerating achievement of the MDGs and agreeing a new Post 2015 development framework should not be mutually reinforcing and integrated rather than undertaken in parallel processes. Instead, the quest for Sustainable Development Goals and the Post 2015 agenda should provide an opportunity to review and build on the current MDG Framework by addressing the numerous gaps and emerging issues such as equity, gender, social protection and inclusion, human rights, governance, energy, employment and environmental sustainability.
2. Discussions around the outcomes from the Rio+20 summit including the Sustainable Development Goals should not undermine the Millennium Development Goals but should come up with strong, inclusive processes and accountability mechanisms for building the linkages between the MDGs, Rio+20 and Post 2015 agenda. In addition, Rio+20 should come up with concrete actions and a robust implementing mechanism that would fully integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development towards accelerating the attainment of the MDGs by 2015.
3. The process for developing a global development framework should be accessible and ensure inclusiveness of ordinary people, especially women and youth. Thus, preparations towards Rio and processes towards a new global development framework should be preceded by extensive awareness raising at the national and local levels. This will generate interest and ensure the active participation of all stakeholders, especially those directly affected by the impact of our inability to meet all of the MDGs which we consider as a basic minimum. They should therefore be consulted and their views incorporated.
4. The UN offices at the national level should enhance coordination and delivery-as-one mechanisms whilst strongly encouraging governments to ensure that, the views of poor people, women, youth, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups are taken into account and incorporated in the development of country reports and consultations towards Rio+20 and beyond.

5. In addressing the gaps in financing the MDGs and Sustainable Development, Rio should enhance commitments towards increasing financing. African governments should practically reduce corruption, increase domestic income by putting in place mechanisms to check capital flight, ensure value for money for concessions given to extractive industries, reduce tax avoidance and evasion as well as introduce equitable taxation. In addition, donor countries should meet their financial commitments based on the principles of the Paris, Accra and Busan Declarations on Aid Effectiveness as well as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
6. That the rights of people and states to development imply the recognition of the rights of populations to overcome poverty, the elimination of conditions that generate inequity and social exclusion. Equally important, are the rights of people to live in harmony with nature based on their religious and cultural values under the principles of Agenda 21 and other relevant instruments. There is therefore the need that these rights be implemented in a context of complementarity in an integral and interdependent manner.
7. That Africa needs new, additional, sufficient and non conditional financial resources, based on the principle of common and differentiated responsibilities, to face the mitigation and, especially, adaptation needs, to avoid and remedy damages and losses caused by climate change.
8. That the transition towards the Green Economy in Africa must address the underlying structural limitations that always put women, youth and other vulnerable groups in a disadvantaged position. These marginalized groups, therefore, should directly benefit from the transition to green economy and be seen and included as key players in the architecture of the green economy rather than the subjects and victims.
9. That African governments must enhance transparency, inclusion of affected communities and judicious management of land, mineral and other natural resources and the income derived from them. This is a key factor in environmental conservation and the provision of resources for achievement of sustainable development including the MDGs and the Post 2015 framework.
10. That African governments should accelerate the implementation of Principle 10 of Rio Declaration first by implementing the UNEP Guidelines and also by adopting an African Convention on Principle 10 to ensure meaningful improvements in citizens participation, access to information, transparency and accountability.

Furthermore, as African Civil Society Organization's:

We commit to working with governments at all level to promote the implementation of these and other recommendations as well as to share best practices, lessons from the field and expertise in consulting with stakeholders within communities using inclusive participatory approaches and in monitoring and evaluating the impact of government policies on its citizens with a view to readjusting these where possible.

Agreed in Dakar, Senegal, 14th May 2012

