



THE 7TH CITIZENS' CONTINENTAL CONFERENCE

26 – 28 JANUARY 2017

Concept note

The 7th Citizens' Continental Conference will be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on **Thursday 26 – Saturday 28 January 2017** on the margins of the 28th African Union Summit.

THEMES AND DISCUSSIONS

The conference will focus on 3 main themes:

1. Centring Africa's People

The African Union (AU) since its inception has pronounced on the importance of a people-centred Union.¹ One of the five pillars of the African Union Commission (AUC) Strategic Plan for 2014-2017 focuses on enhancing the operations of the AU and its organs and institutions, including the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), as well as enhancing the involvement of civil society and citizens in the policy making processes of the AU.² Similarly Agenda 2063, which has now become the blueprint for the AU's programme of action, outlines its sixth aspiration as '*An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children*'.³

While we have seen some positive developments in the inclusion of civil society in the programmes of the African Union in past years, especially in specific policy meetings of the African Union Commission (AUC), and other organs and institutions, many challenges remain in both the representation and participation of civil society in continental and national policy-making spaces. CSOs have over the years themselves taken up the challenge of creating spaces for engagement like the Continental Conferences. One of the key decision-making forums of the AU is the biannual Summit. The Assembly has now made official the practice of having different foci for the two summits, noting in its June 2015 decision that it would 'continue with the two Summits, which should be streamlined with one Summit, focusing on Policy Issues with participation of partners in accordance with the Rules of Procedure; and the other Summit focusing on the implementation of decisions'. A critical challenge has been the exclusion of civil society at the Summits particularly of May 2013, June 2015 and July 2016. Many organisations note that there is an increase in closing spaces at the continental level for civil society, especially for African-led organisations.

The convenings under this theme will focus on citizen participation in Africa and on the realisation of the 'people-centred' aspiration. How do citizens view their participation in continental policy making spaces and what needs to happen to change the current paradigm? What does true citizen participation look like, particularly for young people who are the focus of the Summit's theme? How will the AU's new financing model and restructuring process enhance citizen participation? How do we deal with issues of power and marginalisation and their impact on citizen participation?

One issue that requires greater participation of Africa's citizens is in the election of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), who is the Chief Executive Officer, legal representative and Accounting Officer of the Secretariat of Africa's apex institution. A people-centred union requires people to participate in the selection of this crucial position that directs the implementation of decisions impacting the life of Africans.

¹ Including for example, the AU's vision, the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration

² Assembly/AU/Dec.476(XXI) – Decision of the 21st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held in May 2013 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

³ African Union Commission, 2015. AGENDA 2063: The Africa We Want. First Ten-Year Implementation Plan: 2013-2023

We intend to hold a debate at the opening of the conference with the Candidates for the position of AUC Chairperson.

2. #VisaFreeCitizens

Free movement of Africans has been recognised as the foundation for regional integration of Africa and a fundamental pre-condition for economic development of the continent. The issue of free movement of Africans is one that has gained currency across the continent particularly at the governmental level, over the past few years. In addition to various pronouncements at African Union Summits, countries like Rwanda, Ghana and Mauritius have recently removed or eased visa restrictions for Africans.

The African Development Bank launched a report on Visa Openness in Africa in early 2016. The African Union launched an African Passport at the July 2016 Summit in Rwanda. The European Union has stepped up its efforts to address migration concerns from the countries of origin and transit through multilateral, bilateral and regional arrangements with African countries supported by multiple funding facilities. But there has been little engagement amongst African citizens on what all these developments mean realistically for them in their pursuit of a better life for themselves. The lack of participation of African citizens and CSOs in continental processes and bilateral decision-making has reserved this issue to state-centric discourses that prioritise security over rights.

Between 2011 and 2013 CCPAU completed a signature study on freedom of movement of people in Africa. The study was carried out at two levels, at the regional level (with some country analysis) and at the continental level. It emerged from the study that many African countries have placed several obstacles on intra-continental movement of people, a situation that the AU agrees needs to be urgently addressed as it exacerbates irregular migration and related criminality. While it is recognised that regional arrangements for free movement of Africans are particularly crucial and beneficial for Africa's developmental agenda, irregular migration, security, terrorism and trafficking of persons are still major concerns for African countries. Statistics from UNDESA (2013) show that nearly half (15.3 million) of all African migrants migrate within Africa which has a huge social and economic impact for African countries. African States are uniquely placed as multiply countries of origin, transit and destination, and many have already been dealing with high levels of migration for years.

The convenings under this theme will highlight various facets of this issue like drivers of migration, socio-economic corollaries, the impact of irregular migration on women and youth, the effect of corruption, the opportunities in increased legal mobility, security versus rights, the legal framework for free movement, successes and challenges in practice, and multilateral versus bilateral arrangements.

3. Breaking the cycle of conflict: Transitional Justice in Africa

Facilitating transition to democracy, good governance, and promoting justice and reconciliation in Africa is central to the mandate of the African Union. Indeed, interpretation of the objectives and principles elaborated in the Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU) places the institution at the centre of transitional justice processes. While recognising that “the scourge of conflicts in Africa”⁴ presents a multifaceted threat, the Constitutive Act commits the African Union to the promotion of peace and security, human rights and the fight against impunity. It also foresees interventionist action by the

⁴ Preamble to the Constitutive Act of the African Union OAU Doc CAB/LEG/23 15 (11 July 2000), entered into force 26 May 2001.

African Union in situations where grave crimes are committed within countries on the Continent.⁵

As part of its thematic reflections on issues relevant to conflict prevention and as a contribution to the ongoing efforts by the AU to fight impunity and promote a holistic approach that balances the imperatives of peace and justice in post-conflict contexts, the Panel of the Wise adopted a report “**Non-Impunity, Truth Justice and Reconciliation.**” The report recommends the development of a policy framework on Transitional Justice to provide the AU with the necessary tools to respond judiciously to the intertwined objectives of securing peace and the longer term importance of establishing the rule of law and preventing future conflicts. In response to this recommendation, the African Union Commission (AUC) initiated a process to develop an **African Union Transitional Justice Policy (AUTJP)** to strengthen the AU leadership and support for Member States in implementing their governance, rule of law, human rights, and development and reconstruction agenda. This is particularly pertinent in the situation of increased conflict and declining democracy that we are seeing across the continent.

In addition, the participation of youth in violent conflicts on the continent is widely reported and research about youth and conflict generally stresses the negative roles they fulfil, either as victims or perpetrators of violence. Less attention has been given to acknowledging the positive and necessary role that youth can play within societies that are in transition, and consequently ignore the positive capacities and resources that young people possess to engage actively in peace processes. Youth have unique resources that need to be recognised and utilised in peace processes and have crucial capacities in creating peace activities with TJ. Countries such as Uganda, DRC, Cote d’Ivoire, and others have young populations that are coming of age in the immediate wake of violent conflict. These governments have a responsibility to ensure that post-conflict priorities include educational policies which acknowledge this history, and create spaces for young people to safely question, learn about, and engage with the past.

The convenings in this conference will address transitional justice in Africa and modes of ensuring sustainable peace on the continent by dealing effectively with injustices and root causes of conflict. How do we break the trend of cyclic and prolonged conflict in Africa and build sustainable peace? How do we achieve justice and accountability within the context of fragility? How do we promote inclusion and participation of different levels of society in transitional processes? What are the benchmarks and signposts during transition?

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the 7th Citizens` Continental Conference are to:

- i. Engage in critical reflection on the current challenges, gaps and opportunities in the three thematic areas, with the aim to provide clear, concise and co-ordinated recommendations from a citizen perspective;
- ii. Reinvigorate co-ordination and joint advocacy of civil society;

⁵ Ibid, art 4(h).

- iii. Enhance the networking of civil society by ensuring the inclusion of new organisations with more seasoned organisations working in key policy areas;
- iv. Build on progress from the 6th Citizens' Continental Conference regarding human and peoples' rights and other matters of importance on the Agenda of the African Union Summit.

METHODOLOGIES AND COSTING

CCPAU will convene the Conference in collaboration with key partners. Attendance of the conference will be self-funded. There will be a conference fee of \$250 with an early bird registration fee of \$200 (till end of December), to cover the administrative costs of convening the conference. We will invite partner organisations to convene parallel panels under the 3 themes at the cost of \$4,000 per panel to cover the costs of rooms and contribute to the costs of the facilities. They would be entitled to bring in four (4) participants for free (no conference fees).

The Conference will be organised over three (3) days with plenary and parallel sessions to create ample time for debate and dialogue among the participants. Attention will be paid to using innovative methodologies to encourage substantive engagement, including audio-visuals, debates, and participative developmental approaches. A final communiqué will be drafted by a sub-committee, discussed during the plenaries, finalised and submitted after the Conference to relevant institutions of the African Union and other identified actors.

We intend to kick off the conference with a moderated dialogue discussion with the candidates for the position of the AUC Chairperson regarding their vision for the Continent, their interpretation of Pan-Africanism and how they intend to overcome the various institutional challenges they will encounter.

We expect participation from African citizens, social movements, CSOs, journalists, representatives of African Union bodies, intergovernmental and multilateral institutions, and other relevant stakeholders. A concerted effort will be made to engage the media in advance, to attend, cover and participate in the sessions of the Conference, and particularly for the debate with the candidates for the Chairperson of the AUC. There will be media materials including press releases and pre-arranged interviews with participants.

EXPECTED RESULTS

The following are the expected results of the initiative:

- A better perspective of the candidates for the AUC Election and their leadership plans for the Union;
- A new claimed space for citizens' engagement in the affairs of the Union;
- A final Communiqué capturing concrete recommendations on the change that needs to happen in each theme under discussion addressed to different actors;
- CSOs engaging with AU institutions and on AU issues will clearly illustrate their value in carrying forward Agenda 2063 and reaching a broad and diverse set of African citizens, hence firmly demonstrating to the AU the pertinent need for CSO partnerships.

BACKGROUND

CCPAU has successfully held six (6) Citizens' Continental Conferences, between the years of 2007 – 2016 in which it has engaged various Civil Society Organisations from around Africa and beyond. These conferences seek to bring African voices to the African Union, and to facilitate the creation of policy dialogue spaces for African citizens and civil society organisations to provide the AU with alternative narratives and raise various concerns. In particular, the Citizens' Conferences seek to:

- Provide an avenue for synthesising continental civil society positions on specific policy issues which were under consideration at the Summit
- Provide a space for deeper networking between civil society.

The conferences have helped a number of African CSOs to build their capacity and expertise in understanding the decision making processes of the AU.

The 6th Citizens Continental Conference was held from 21- 23 January 2016, and was attended by 179 African citizens, social movements, CSO representatives, journalists, representatives of African Union bodies, intergovernmental and multilateral institution representatives, and other relevant stakeholders. The organisations and institutions working in all five geographical regions of Africa, and the diaspora, met ahead of the 26th African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government. The 6th Conference sought to commemorate the 2016 *African Year of Human Rights with a Particular Focus on the Rights of Women* and to:

- a) Engage in critical reflection on the current challenges, gaps and opportunities in addressing Human Rights in Africa with the aim to provide clear, concise and co-ordinated recommendations from civil society
- b) Reinvigorate co-ordination and joint advocacy of civil society
- c) Enhance the networking of civil society by ensuring the inclusion of new organisations with more seasoned organisations working on the key policy areas.

The conference provided a forum for civil society organisations and African citizens to critically reflect on the progress to date, current challenges, gaps and opportunities in addressing Human Rights in Africa, and to share narratives and insights on what ought to be done and, where possible, provided clear, concise and coordinated recommendations. While appreciating the significant institutional and normative progress to date in promoting and protecting human and peoples' rights, and especially women's rights, participants regretted that the continent still faced a multitude of governance and human rights challenges. The conference, organised over three (3) days, focussed on 6 key thematic areas under which civil society organisations made commitments, and also adopted several recommendations addressed to AU Member States and the African Union itself, related to the strengthening of institutions, reforming of discriminatory laws and policies, addressing structural causes of rights violations, ratifying and domesticating key legal instruments and mobilising and deploying adequate resourcing for human rights commitments.

ABOUT CCPAU

CCPAU has established itself as a critical Pan-Africanist initiative which facilitates a deeper engagement of African civil society organisations and citizens with regional and continental policies and programmes. CCPAU's mandate extends to ensuring that the continent has its people at its centre and not governments, and that decision-making is driven by, and accountable and accessible to African citizens. CCPAU is a network of national, regional and continental African civil society organisations and citizens. We utilise invited and claimed spaces to foster substantive and procedural changes within regional and continental mechanisms, and to amplify African

citizen voices. Our theory of change recognises citizen-led accountability as the bedrock of democratic governance and development on the continent. Citizens are the legitimate rights holders and need to be more involved in claiming the promise of a "peaceful, prosperous and integrated Africa".

CCPAU has held 6 continental citizens' conferences, and a number regional consultations and trainings on the African Union for civil society actors from across Africa. We have mobilised several organisations on issues of Pan-African concern and are recognised as a strong Pan-African network that has sustained vigorous engagements with the AU. We have enabled civil society to give inputs into policy processes of AU organs and institutions and we are regularly approached by various AU Organs and institutions to co-convene initiatives and identify organisations to participate in policy processes. We work to ensure knowledge-driven advocacy, preceded by critical analyses of issues by undertaking research on important continental issues where there is little alternative information.

PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

African Women's Communication and Development Network (FEMNET)

Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVSR)

Pan African Lawyers' Union (PALU)