

# **SUBMISSION OF STATEMENT OF THE ETHIOPIAN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS**

**TO**

**THE 2<sup>ND</sup> MEETING OF  
THE COMMISSION FOR AFRICA,**

**UNECA, Addis Ababa, 6-8, October 2004**

## **I. VOLUNTARY SECTOR (UMBRELLA ORGANISATION/NETWORKS & RESOURCE NGOS)**

Christian Relief and Development Association (CRDA)  
Civil Society Campaign Against Famine in Ethiopia (SC-CAFÉ)  
Consortium of Reproductive Health Association (CORHA)  
Ethiopian Inter-Faith Forum for Development, Dialogue and Action (EIFDDA)  
Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA)  
Initiative Africa (IA)  
Inter Africa Group (IAG)  
Network of Ethiopian Women's Associations (NEWA)  
Poverty Action Network Ethiopia (PANE)  
Sustainable Land Use Forum (SLUF)

## **II. OTHER CIVIL SOCIETY INSTITUTIONS (PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS)**

Ethiopian Water Resource Association (EWRA)  
Forum for Social Studies (FSS)

## **III. PRIVATE SECTOR**

Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce (AACC)  
Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce (ECC)

**Submission of Statement of the Ethiopian Civil Society  
Organizations to the  
2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Commission for Africa  
UNECA, Addis Ababa, 6-8 October 2004**

We, the undersigned, representing 14 Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations and Networks including the development NGO's, faith based organizations, professional associations and the private sector engaged in the areas of food and livelihood security, water, environment, child and women's rights, advocacy, etc. have the honour of issuing of this statement to the Commission for Africa meeting taking place here in Addis Ababa, the seat of the African Union and the UN Economic Commission for Africa, from 6-8 October 2004.

Firstly, we would like to thank Prime Minister Tony Blair for putting Africa's longstanding struggle with poverty high on the international agenda.

As this honourable Commission is well aware of, Africa has many complex and seemingly intractable problems. Resolving these problems should focus on the following critical issues:

- Livelihoods and food security
- Debt and ensuring quality of aid
- Fair international trading relationships and economic justice
- Accountable and transparent governance and expansion of democratic space
- The challenges of HIV/AIDS
- Degradation of the physical environment
- Preventing and resolving internal and inter-regional conflicts
- High population growth rates

This represents a tall order of interrelated issues, which requires ambitious programmes and concerted efforts to deal with. We shall expand on some of these issues, which we have daily encounter with:

## **1. FOODS AND LIVELIHOODS SECURITY**

This week, you are meeting in a country in which more than one in ten Ethiopians cannot produce enough to feed themselves even in a good year<sup>2</sup>. In years of drought, this figure rises to affect 15 million people. The period between droughts is becoming shorter and the number of people exposed to famine during drought years is projected to reach 25 million by the year 2020.

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<sup>12</sup> Between 5 and 7 million Ethiopians out of a population of close to 70 million people.

***While welcoming the recent commitment by the G-8 to make a significant contribution towards “Breaking the cycle of recurrent famine in the Horn of Africa”, we ask the Commission for Africa to challenge the G-8 to commit the necessary resources with specific timeframe for delivery, which is needed to eliminate hunger both here in Ethiopia and across Africa.***

Further, along with land tenure security, the efficient management and utilization of water resources plays a key role in overcoming the consequences of current drought and famines. To this end, our government and several Ethiopian NGOs have long-term strategies and programmes to develop the country’s water resources. These strategies are designed to bring several hundreds of thousands of hectares of land under irrigation. Ethiopia could grow significantly more food, provide raw materials for its agriculture led industrialisation policy, and produce cash crops for the export market. Each major river valley could become an economic growth centre for developing agriculture, livestock, electricity, and agro-industry. These would then facilitate employment for our young population, expand and diversify our export base and encourage growth in remote and marginalized areas.

***If we are to break out of our recurrent cycle of famine and food handouts, we need substantial investment from the international community in developing our water resources, and we ask the Africa Commission to help convince the international community of the need for this investment.***

***As civil society organisations we will also work with our partners in the North to build popular support for Governments, making significant commitments in favour of Ethiopia and Africa in general.***

Yet, we do not lose sight of the fact that the major rivers in Africa do not stop flowing at international borders. African governments that have stake in the Nile Basin have been engaged in difficult negotiations to achieve an equitable share of the Nile waters for all the peoples whose land it touches. Although so much depends on water development, these negotiations have continued for over a decade.

The successful outcome of these negotiations would also serve as a model for other river basins and watersheds in Africa, and would strengthen peace and stability within the region and beyond.

***We, therefore, call on the Commission for Africa to remind Britain of her historical responsibilities and challenge her to mobilise her European and US partners to use their influence for a quick and equitable outcome to these negotiations on the Nile waters.***

## **2. ENVIRONMENT**

As the Commission is aware, the vast majority of the African people are rural and agrarian. Their survival very much hinges upon sustainable management of their environment. Our forests, including tropical rain forests, are disappearing, our soil is being eroded, our rivers and lakes are drying up, and our plants and animals are disappearing. Global warming and mismanagement and plundering of the tropical rain forests have contributed to this. Poverty is also a key root cause, with poor people increasingly depleting their environment.

***We challenge the Commission for Africa to urgently support and promote 'an environmental Marshall plan for Africa'.***

- Specifically, this would support the scale up of successful micro-level soil, forestry and water conservation through gully-plugging, hill-side terracing, area closures and natural regeneration and re-forestation of indigenous and suitable exotic trees.

In this regard, Africa's population especially its energetic youth could be mobilised, but requires designing a genuine incentive package, which ensures ownership and benefit sharing for families and communities. We shall stand ready to help with such mobilisation and development of incentive packages.

## **3. DEBT**

We have welcomed both the HIPC Initiative, and the success of our Government to ensure that Ethiopia is among the first group of African countries to benefit from the HIPC debt relief process. We also welcome the recent commitment by the UK government to write off 10% of the money owed by low-income countries to the World Bank and African Development Bank.

And yet, Ethiopia will still be paying an average of USD 116.7 million per annum between 2003-2013 and USD 217.9 million per annum till 2023, in debt repayment – money sorely needed – to reduce poverty and increase food security. In contrast to the G-8 pledge towards breaking the cycle of recurrent famine with more and better aid, this debt repayment is like giving with one hand and taking with another.

The burden of debt repayment is depriving poor people across Africa of food and water, children of their education and sick people of any hope of treatment. The growing debt burden in Africa curtails the possibility of wealth creation and contributes to an even bleaker future.

***As yet we do not echo the call of many African people for our governments to repudiate these unjust debts. Instead we call on the Commission for Africa to join the call for the total cancellation of debts of the poorest African countries.***

## **4. TRADE**

We know that our future prosperity lies in free trade with countries across the world. However, the international market is far from fair, our export capacity is based on a few raw materials whose price drops every year and our industries are fragile and would close under the pressure of external competition. The West protects its markets through 'escalating tariffs', thus confining Africa to continue exporting raw materials and subtle forms of non-tariff protection mechanisms, such as phyto-sanitary restrictions. Agricultural products including food are produced in the West under huge protection and substantial subsidies. These are then dumped on the African markets in many ways including through the system of monetisation of food aid.

It is in this context that African countries are being pressured to join the World Trade Organisation under Cotonou agreements. We recognise that African industry cannot be protected in perpetuity from the global market. However, it will need to be protected for a period while it develops and the current inequities in the global market must also be addressed.

***To this end, we call for an honest assessment on how African trade can be revived. This would include support for strategies that build and diversify our exports, process our own raw materials and modernise our industry.***

It is, therefore, necessary to address issues like the removal of restraints and liberalization of those areas in which African countries become successful exporters. These issues, among others, are liberalization of trade in agriculture, the removal of tariff peaks and escalation in the food, textile and clothing industries: ending the abuse of anti-dumping procedures, addressing the problems of rules of origin, phyto-sanitary measures, technical standards and environmental barriers. Closer to home, we believe that much needs to be done by governments across Africa to reduce red tape and enable the private sector to create wealth.

## **5. RECIPROCITY IN INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS**

We note the profound power imbalance between African countries, and rich countries, in terms of how they are treated by International Financial Institutions. African governments are subject to strict conditions, and mechanisms for compliance. There is no equivalent mechanism at all for ensuring compliance to the commitments made by donor governments and the International Financial Institutions. Key commitments such as to open markets, finance for Millennium Development Goals and debt cancellation targets remain unmet.

***We, thus, challenge the Africa Commission to press for a mechanism so that donor governments and institutions - as much as recipient governments - face sanctions for renegeing on commitments made.***

## **6. GOVERNANCE**

For Africa to address the many challenges facing her, we need to mobilise the talents and capacities of our peoples so that we take our destiny into our own hands. At the end of the 'Cold War' we hoped that Africa would make up for 'the lost decade', the decade during which Africa's growth declined significantly under the burden of dictatorship and debt. Indeed a lot has been achieved since then. Many brutal dictatorships were overthrown to be replaced with democratically elected governments. Yet civil society remains weak, and is mistrusted by many governments in Africa. Respect for human rights remains fragile, including the rights of people to speak and organise freely.

We need systems of governance, which create enough democratic space for Africa's people to debate issues openly and constructively. We need the space, supportive environment, the freedom to organize in socio-economic interest groups at all levels, and resources to develop the capacity of civil society, so that we can play our role effectively in maintaining accountability and debate.

We are part of the solution to many of African problems and we want our poverty alleviation efforts, our work in empowerment of poor communities to be recognized and valued. We are committed allies to governments and donors efforts to reduce poverty and to help meet the Millennium Development Goals and we seek enabling partnership for this.

As citizens' organizations, our rights and responsibilities to raise critical issues and engage challengingly and constructively with our governments need to be recognized and practiced.

In this regard, we note the trend for direct budget support from donor countries to African governments with mixed feeling. On the one hand African government institutions need the resources though they have capacity limitations to effectively implement programmes and on the other we worry that governments depending on foreign budgetary support will become vulnerable to external conditionality and risk to become even less accountable to their own citizens.

***We, therefore, challenge the Commission for Africa to design a mechanism whereby the recipient governments become accountable to their citizens, their parliament and civil society, and so to encourage effective accountability and transparency and contribute to the development of a vibrant and capable civil society.***

***We also challenge the Commission for Africa to develop indicators that enable African people to monitor the development of the democratic space in our societies and to monitor effectiveness of programmes implemented with direct budgetary support.***

## **7. GENDER, YOUTH & POPULATION**

Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular are challenged by a high rate of population growth compared to dwindling of resources in a context of failure of wealth creation. For us Africans, our most precious resources are our young people who now represent two thirds of the African population. Yet many of Africa's young people face a future of hunger, poor education, unemployment, HIV/AIDS or conflict. Young women in Africa are even more powerless and may be subject to abuse or forced through poverty into sex work.

Massive efforts are being undertaken in some African countries including Ethiopia in order to educate the young, though the quality leaves a lot to be desired. The latter probably, for a part, explains the higher unemployment rates with school-leavers and graduates, especially women.

Apart from schooling opportunities, skills and leadership development programmes need to be promoted at all levels. It is vital that we multiply sports and recreation facilities and libraries. If we are successful with employment creation and job placement opportunities, young women and men will develop their self-worth, feel that they are valued and thus have a stake in society.

***In this regard we would like to express our serious concern that the women's issues and agenda committed at various international conventions – which hold the key to resolving some of the above problems - are marginalized. We challenge this Commission to bring it back high on the agenda of African countries and the international community. Equally serious attention should be given to translate population policies into practice in order to reconcile African population growth with its wealth creation.***

## **8. HIV/AIDS**

The challenges posed by HIV/AIDS need no further elaboration. However, addressing it properly remains an uphill struggle. There are glaring needs for concerted efforts for effective utilisation of resources in the interest of PLWAs (People living with Aids) as well as in support of OVCs (orphans and vulnerable children). Unfortunately, we encounter cases where substantial amounts remain unspent in government coffers due to capacity constraints.

NGOs and CSOs, especially faith based organisations could be an effective mechanisms to channel funds for those who need support and attention. Effective service delivery for those in need will contribute enormously to fight stigma and discrimination and also to facilitate efforts to change peoples' behaviour.

***We, therefore, like to challenge the Commission for Africa to defend the principle of the flow of resources \_ in HIV/AIDS and in the domain of other interventions\_ to where they could be most efficiently used irrespective of their origin: governmental, bilateral, multi-lateral or NGOs. Equally best practices in mainstreaming HIV/AIDS in development interventions should be made widely available for replication and scaling up of their impact.***

## **9. THE COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

Finally, we note that the Commission for Africa is currently one of many initiatives looking at the problems which Africa is facing, and ***we invite this honourable Commission to exert its efforts so that these initiatives are harmonised, communicated to the people in whose name such initiatives are undertaken, so that they contribute to genuine efforts to transform the lives of poor people in Africa.***

In Africa, there are plethora of good policies and strategies, both at national and continental level. What is lacking are the resources, the capacity and the political will to translate them into tangible projects and programmes.

Over-bridging the gap between policy and practice, should, in our view be the focus of attention for this honourable Commission if it is to be effective in making a difference for Africa.

As committed stakeholders, we do hope that this initiative does not gather dust or remain only a matter for academic interest at best. We shall stand ready, where our services and cooperation are deemed necessary and useful.

We wish this honourable Commission a successful deliberations!

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