

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Japan, 7 April 2008

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

Members of the civil society in Africa and Japan meeting at the African Partnership Forum (APF) in Japan have committed themselves to organise and monitor the African development process with a view to making Africa a peaceful, progressive, democratic and prosperous continent that can guarantee human security for its inhabitants and contribute substantially to global development.

The civil society members urged the African leaders attending the 10th APF meeting which has the theme “Making a Vibrant Africa a Reality through TICAD IV and G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit” to take the African continent in the “right direction” away from the pains and challenges that characterised the continent’s past. The group, at the same time, asked the international partners to use the opportunity to “listen more, to understand more and to know how best to support the Africans as they take charge of their destiny”.

The members of the civil society recognised all the positive developments that have occurred on the continent such as the unprecedented proliferation of democracy in most African countries, the setting up of Regional and Economic Communities to promote trade as well as the work of the African Union to resolve conflicts and disputes on the continent.

However, the group felt that there is still much more to be done:

- a. More urgent attention to be paid to ensuring that the electoral processes are less volatile and more immune from manipulation.
- 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 marco 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 boost the quality of life and increase economic activities.
- i. Tackle the threat of climate change by ensuring funding for programmes and policies that will facilitate adaptation and mitigation
- j. 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
- k. Ensure that development partners in the richer nations keep the promises they made at the Gleneagles G8 summit to scale up aid

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. Mrs 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 members 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 -

Note To Editors:

For further information contact:

'Dapo Oyewole, Focal Point for African civil society: dapo@thinkafrica.org

Toko Tomita, Focal Point for Japanese civil society: toko@hungerfree.net