REGIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM EAST AFRICA

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«Engaging Civil Society in Building Resilient Economies in Post Covid-19
East Africa Region»

GROUPE DE LA BANQUE AFRICAINE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT
AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP

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ACRONYMS

AFAWA	Affirmative Finance Action for Women
AFDB	Africa Development Bank
AFCTA	African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement
ADF	African Development Fund
AFRICAN-WIB	African Women in Business
AWIBI	African Women in Business Investments Limited
AIDS	Auto Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AU-AFDB-GCA	African Adaptation Acceleration Summit
BREFONS	Building Resilience in Food and Nutrition Security
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CAMFED	Africa For the Campaign for Female Education
CSE	Civil Society Engagement
CODE	Cooperative Development Environment
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CR	Consumer Reports
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DBDM	Development Business Delivery Model
EAC	East African Community

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOP	Indicative Operational Programme
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSISA	Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa
PIDA	Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa
PPP	Public Private Partnerships
RDGE	East African Regional Office
REC	Regional Economic Community
RI	Regional Integration
RISP	Regional Integration Strategy Paper
RMC	Regional Member Countries
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SMMEs	Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises
TAAT	Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refuges
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

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INTRODUCTION

Background and Rationale

Based on feedback from previous forums and resulting from one of the main recommendations of the Capitalization Study on 10 years of the Bank's Annual CSO Forums [1], regional forums are a major innovation. They are now organized across the continent in lieu of the annual Bank Civil Society Forum. The initiative is aligned with the aim of the Bank to consult with and engage further with the broader civil society community and the Bank's Civil Society Committee.

It stems from the Bank's desire, through its Development Business Delivery Model (DBDM), to be closer to the people it serves. It will also be an opportunity for the Bank to share its regional vision and priority areas that inform its operations (RISP), and to explore key opportunities for strengthening civil society engagement at the regional level. The theme is closely aligned with that of the Bank's 2021 Annual Meetings, "Engaging civil society in building resilient economies in post Africa", and will be defined in close consultation with the Regional/Country Managers and Regional Civil Society Committee Members.

Regional Approach

The overall goal of this regional approach is to enhance stakeholder engagement at the regional level. Each region will determine its most relevant theme by highlighting existing challenges and opportunities with a view to enhancing civil society engagement and thus improve the impact and quality of the Bank's operations. The main recommendations, conclusions and concrete commitments of these regional forums will lead to a follow-up and implementation plan. Specifically, the regional CSO Forum shall provide a platform for:

- Giving an overview of orientations of the Bank's Regional Integration Strategy Papers (RISPs) and Civil Society Engagement (CSE) in the region.
- Deliberating on the theme(s) selected while highlighting challenges and existing opportunities for CSE that can enhance the relevance, impact, and quality of the Bank's operations.
- Identifying concrete areas where the Bank can engage with CSOs in the regions.

OPENING SESSION

Welcome Remarks

Ms Nnenna Nwabufo, Director General, RDGE

On behalf of the Bank, Ms Nwabufo welcomed all the attendees to the virtual edition of the East Africa Regional Civil Society Forum, and stated that civil society in the sub-region had become an important stakeholder that regularly participates in consultation frameworks and operations conducted by the Bank. Collaboration between the Bank and civil society has significantly increased, as evidenced by several projects in the region and the CSOs' inputs in the preparation and review of country strategy papers, she said. There are still opportunities to further exchange views and hopes that the Forum theme will yield meaningful deliberations, she concluded.

Ms Zéneb Touré, Division Manager, Civil Society and Community Engagement Division

In her welcome address, Ms Touré disclosed that the objective of the Bank was to be closer to the people it serves, and that this was also a recommendation by civil society.

Civil Society Engagement in the Bank's policies and operations resonates with the Bank's Development and Business Delivery Model of the Bank, who is currently engaged in developing a number of tools and guidelines to better incorporate this engagement in its operations and policies. This regional forum provides a platform for dialogue with civil society, on its role in post-COVID-19 building efforts. Ms Touré invited participants to identify existing opportunities and strategies that could be deployed by the Bank in partnership with CSOs. She emphasized that the recommendations and concrete commitments of this regional forum would be presented during the 2022 Annual Forum and lead to a monitoring and implementation plan.

Mr Masheti Mashingila, CSOs Committee Member representing East Africa

Mr Mashingila welcomed all present to CSO Forum for Eastern Africa, then recalled that Africa was not yet in the post COVID-19 era and that the pandemic continued to have adverse effects on CSOs in the region. Illustration of his say was the closure of the already threatened civic space, the adoption of restrictive laws, policies regulations, and the significant drop in funding opportunities.

Mr Mashingila argued that regional reintegration was losing ground to the benefit of countries' sovereignty, while free movement of people and goods had been suffering a major jolt. There are cross-border restrictions across the region, but integrated regional efforts to tackle COVID-19 are not observed, he lamented. The key sectors of the economy are experiencing a takeover due to the burden of unmanageable debt. Against this backdrop, CSOs welcome the Bank's efforts to consult and engage further with them. Mr Mashingila expressed hope that the Forum would lead to informed conclusions and actionable recommendations as a basis for an implementation plan.

Ms Maria Mulindi, Director, Special Programmes, Office of the President

While welcoming the participants, Ms Mulindi suggested that the Bank was sharpening its partnerships to focus more on a people-centred approach, working closely with local and regional CSOs, social entrepreneurs and innovators to create values that are shared by African citizens, with significant impact on their lives. Civil society in the region is therefore called upon to increase its visibility and better learn from past experiences.

Ms Mulindi explained that during the Bank's Annual Civil Society Forum last year, the President of the Bank, Dr Akinwumi Adesina, reaffirmed the Bank's strong commitment towards civil society. The world currently requires an effective and inclusive response, innovative approaches for engagement, and new partnerships. She concluded that lessons learned should help all concerned to rethink strategies and find practical mechanisms and solutions that will ensure high-quality rebuilding.

Presentation on the RISP: EA-RISP background, objectives and features. Tilahun TEMESGEN (Ph.D.), Chief Regional Economist, RDGE

Dr Temesgne introduced the Eastern Africa's RISP, emphasising the importance of regional integration to promote development by expanding markets and connectivity within the sub-region. He presented the two pillars and elements of the RISP to the participants, with the document relying on an IOP portfolio of 50 projects claiming an estimated total budget of USD3.2Bn in the first pillar and USD 77.4 in the second pillar.

The EA RISP Mid-Term Review (MTR) was approved by CODE in June 2021. The MTR noted that the EA-RISP was being implemented more slowly than anticipated, mainly due to the pandemic-related constraints and other challenges. RDGE has already launched the process of preparing CRs for the current RISP and a subsequent new RISP for 2023–2027.Emerging challenges and opportunities for RI will be thoroughly assessed as they will have a bearing in the regional integration agenda.

Key messages

- There is need for new and innovative strategies in addressing post-COVID socio-economic challenges; the Bank welcomes the opportunity to work with local Civil Society players to determine what this model will look like, considering the different mandates in the continent's development agenda.
- Regional reintegration is losing ground to the benefit of countries' sovereignty. This affects regional reintegration agenda. CSOs welcome the Bank's willingness to consult and engage further with them to address some of these barriers.
- In its operations at country and regional level, the Bank should work with and engage CSOs. It is important for the Bank to undertake meaningful public participation so that the citizens better grasp its operations.
- For civil society to make a significant contribution, the voice of CSOs should be strong. The Bank should support capacity building for CSOs.

PANEL DISCUSSION – SESSION ONE

Overview of the Panellists and Discussion

- ***Mr Mutemi wa Kiama,*** *Social Entrepreneur. Community Organizer, Social Justice & Accountability Champion, Movements Builder & Coach*
- ***Mr Gilbert Musinguzi,*** *Uganda Debt Network*
- ***Dr Jacob Oduor,*** *Chief Country Economist, Tanzania*

The discussions centred on the need to achieve economic growth in the region specifically by Debt Resolution, with the assistance of CSOs . Mr Mutemi's presentation focused on debt in East Africa and Kenya, specifically comparing the debt issue to extraction exploitation in the colonial era, which is currently continuing in the form of aid or debt. Africans need to get out of the debt trap, as debt that does not really improve the human development index of ordinary Africans due to theft or looting by those in power.

According to AfDB's forecast, the average ratio of debt to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) across Africa is expected to increase from 60% in 2019 to 70% and could go higher. The use of taxation resources to mitigate the effects of debt is strangling the economy and ordinary people; for example, VAT in Kenya is being charged on petroleum products that are already heavily taxed, as the government is avoiding any risk of debt default. Mr Mutemi stated that most of Kenya's debt is totally unmanageable for the moment and that the bulk of the GDP s henceforth allocated to debt repayment. CSOs should engage with the AfDB to design ways to reduce the effects of debt. The ordinary people also need more Bank's assistance through civil society, which keeps denouncing unmanageable debt and poor management of the economy.

Mr Musinguzi highlighted that East Africa is home to about 195 million, with the majority of the population living in rural areas (over 73%), where access to water, sanitation and food insecurity still a big challenge. The sub-region also faces serious socio-economic challenges such as poverty, hunger and poor nutrition, flows of refugees, and political instability. Economic activities have a low manufacturing component, and the related fluctuations in commodity prices create economic and social pressures in the sub-region. East Africa is also vulnerable to natural disasters, dependent on rain-fed agriculture, and faces persistent current account deficits and rising public debt levels, which affects economic activities and international trade while posing risks for debt sustainability. While debt is on the increase, transparency and corruption are worsening.

Dr Oduor reminded the forum that African public debt was rising even before the pandemic. In East Africa it moved from 40% in 2011 to 73% in 2021, partly because of the COIVID-19 issues. Good management of debt is paramount because it is not possible to talk about development without debt at individual, corporate or government level. CSOs should continue to lobby for debt mechanisms restructuring, reporting on debt management policies, comprehensive management information systems and citizen participation processes. Countries should improve transparency on loan execution processes, enhance access to public debt information for citizens. For its part, the Bank should provide for feedback on of the compliance with its policy guidelines, advocate for conducive CSOs operating space, and organize

more capacity building sessions on debt issues (e.g. data analysis and use) for CSOs.

The Bank helps governments manage public debt using two instruments: (i) the African Development Fund, which is a concessional loan window with a grant element. The Country Policy and Institutional Assessments (CPIPs) are applicable here, and the access is limited to countries with poor governance and high corruption; and (ii) the African Development Bank (AfDB) window, which is mainly open to middle- and high-income countries. Limited access is granted to countries with economic situation deteriorating (from low risk of debt distress to medium or high risk). Lastly, the AfDB often provides budget support operations in return for important governance reforms. This helps countries to build capacity for anti-money laundering initiatives so that public finances are used for development.

Two other important initiatives are policy dialogue between the Bank and regional member countries, and the African Financial Stability Mechanism–that allows Africa to respond to a number of crises, as opposed to being taken advantage of by voucher funds in case of crisis. Civil society can think about their involvement in all stages of projects, from planning to budget formulation and expenditure tracking. They can also engage in domestic resource mobilization, expenditure management, anticorruption initiatives and the tracking of audit reports. Similarly, it should be good for civil society to partner with governments, while avoiding confrontation and developing skills on advocacy.

Key Messages

- Institutions that provide loans to countries, including the Bank, should prioritize transparency in their negotiations or put it as one of the loan conditions.
- While loans governance needs some improvements, the AfDB should work strategically with civil society at country and regional levels to increase transparency. CSOs should work with their countries' financiers and partners, including the Bank, in order to make ensure that national governments are held accountable for their actions.
- CSOs vigilance is necessary in monitoring Domestic Resource Mobilization by governments and advocating for how to reduce the burden of debt in Africa. There is a need for continuous review to ensure adherence to loan conditions and the involvement of civil society from the contraction process to the implementation stage.
- Innovations such as leveraging ICT and involvement of the press are key in monitoring debt management, tackling corruption and promoting accountability.

PANEL DISCUSSION–SESSION TWO

Overview of the Panellists and Discussion

- ***Mr David Ruchiu,*** *Africa Director Farm Concerns International*
- ***Ms Sylvia Kuria,*** *Sylvia's Basket, Kenya*
- ***Ms Ngami Mukewa Elizabeth,*** *Consultant and Gender Specialist, AHGC*

The discussion was centred on the role of CSOs in boosting Women's Empowerment in Agricultural Value chain development.

Mr Ruchiu explained that the formal and informal food supply ecosystem underpinning Africa's food system is delicate and complex. Business partnerships exist between highly formal buyers and informal SMEs, but the agricultural value chains depend on women farmers who supply rural aggregation systems. Due to COVID-19, disruptions were created in food systems and livelihoods. Farm Concern International is spearheading Food Systems Partnerships, a safe supply chains consortium of players providing e-commerce food systems, livelihoods and digital solutions. Civil society should take initiatives to help women enterprises to increasingly access market intelligence, working capital and business incubation and graduation.

Ms Sylvia Kuria highlighted the efforts of women in SMEs and how CSOs and AfDB can encourage women to own the agricultural value chain. She emphasized the need for model women farmers to have their leadership and management skills boosted through capacity building. Involvement of female farmers in advocacy and policy is key, as is also the involvement of more women and youth in wholesale and retail distribution along the value chain. To Ms Kuria, CSOs support to women farmers should go beyond training and help them to transition to accessing markets.

Ms Ngami Mukewa focused her presentation on the Bank's Gender Strategy 2021–2025: 'Investing in Africa's Women to Accelerate Growth', which highlights the need for women, girls, men and boys regardless of their background to be able to enjoy equal access to and control productive resources, while benefitting from supportive infrastructure and services. It includes empowering women through access to finance and markets, accelerating employability and job creation for youth and women through skills enhancement and business development, a focus on women's economic empowerment, and their increased access to social services through infrastructure development for their businesses.

CSOs can promote gender transformative actions, involving both women as champions and men as their allies, in order to transform the way women and men think about each other. CSOs are needed to play a role in capacity building, advocacy, sensitization and awareness campaigns to transform the mindsets of communities. CSOs should train women on public speaking, leadership, and self-esteem, and assist them in engaging in adding more value to their products.

Key Messages

- There are exceptional opportunities in the agricultural trade for committed business. CSOs and the Bank can work together to design strategies to reach out to more men and women in the agricultural sector.
- The Bank and CSOs should explore innovative ways to boost women's participation and empowerment in the agricultural value chain.
- The role of civil society in promoting the inclusion of smallholder farmers, including females, in the agricultural value chain is required to ensure food security across the continent.
- CSOs can promote gender transformative actions in agriculture by organizing capacity building, advocacy, and awareness-raising campaigns targeting communities and female farmers.

KEY ACTION POINTS AND WAY FORWARD

Ms Chikanne Joannes Ezeigbo, Civil Society Engagement Consultant, outlined the following key points:

1. The Bank has to involve CSOs in accountability mechanisms through regional initiatives with the country offices. It is important for CSOs and the Bank's representatives to work together as part of regional preparations for the 2022 Global CSOs Forum.

2. The participation of civil society actors in the preparation of country strategy papers in the region should be ensured. The Bank has scheduled Open Days for 2022–2023 to better inform CSOs about the Bank's operations in regional member states.

3. It is crucial to organize CSOs capacity building sessions on the AFAWA initiatives and innovations, as well as on any other relevant priority themes of the Bank in the region.

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CONCLUSION

Deputy Director-General Abdul Kamara appreciated the active participation of the attendees in the Forum. The depth of exchanges brought out many aspects of the challenges to be tackled in the post-COVID era. These include macro and micro-economic issues, especially those facing the poor, marginalized (including women), the people lacking access to basic assets and good education as well as informal-sector players. The Bank's RISP highlights the vision and priority areas that inform the Bank's presence in East Africa and helps CSOs to explore constraints to civil society engagement at regional level. Mr Kamara ensured that the main recommendations and concrete commitments made out of this regional forum would be presented at the Bank's 2022 Annual Civil Society Forum and would inform the Bank's monitoring and implementation plans. He disclosed the Bank's satisfaction for a continuous and increasingly improved engagement with CSOs at the country and regional levels.



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