



**CONFERENCE ON SECURITY, STABILITY, DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION IN
AFRICA (CSSDCA)
January 2005**

Introduction

The activities of the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) for the period under consideration focused upon; a) preparations for launching the Economic Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) in the aftermath of Assembly Decision (Assembly/AU/Dec 4.2(III)) of July 2004 approving the Statute of ECOSOCC; b) the growth and consolidation of the framework of engagement with the African Diaspora in accordance with Executive Council Decision Ext/EX/CL/Dec.6 (III) and c) streamlining the functions of the CSSDCA as part of the impending programme of the transformation of CSSDCA into CIDO – the Civil Society and Diaspora Directorate.

The Executive Council of the Union had at its Extra-Ordinary Session in Addis Ababa, from 6-7 December 2004, approved the budget line for launching ECOSOCC as organ on the recommendations of the Commission and the Permanent Representative Committee (PRC).

Furthermore, the Commission is presenting a definition of the “Diaspora” for consideration by the Executive Council during this Seventh Ordinary Session in Abuja in January 2005 to facilitate Diaspora representation in ECOSOCC. The definition was put forward by the African Union’s Technical Workshop on relationship with the

Diaspora, held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, from 2-4 June 2004, and has since received favorable endorsements from regional Diaspora networks in the Caribbean, Europe, US, etc, as a prelude for consideration by appropriate organs of the Union.

So far, considerable progress has been made in the bid to establish ECOSOCC as a principal formal channel for interface between the African Union and Civil Society Organizations on the continent. However, much more needs to be done. Firstly, there is a need for renewed commitment to the principles of the Constitutive Act that stress partnership with all segments of civil society. Secondly, appropriate policy organs of the Union that have to take action to support this principle must appreciate and underscore its impact and make the necessary provisions for it. There is clearly a need to realize that this responsibility has its costs and the principle of involving civil society in the affairs of the Union must be based on norms of equity. ECOSOCC should be treated as fairly as all other organs because partnership with civil society must be built on trust and mutual respect. Significantly also, the principal formal organ of ECOSOCC should be supported by flexible processes outside ECOSOCC to ensure wider coverage, a greater sense of participation and to cater to special and specific demands.

Preparation for Launching ECOSOCC

The foremost priority has been to conclude plans for launching the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) as a key organ of the Union: As part of this process, the AU Commission has set up an Inter-Departmental Task Force comprising representatives of all

Departments to establish an appropriate schedule and work programme including specific dates and venue, criteria and list for selection of NGOs in line with the provisions of the Transitional Arrangements of the ECOSOCC Statute, the budget line, modalities for involvement of Member States and other related tasks. The activities of the Task Force are being coordinated by the Secretariat of the CSSDCA.

The Task Force held a number of meetings and recommended that ECOSOCC should be launched in the first quarter of 2005, preferably in late February or March. It has also agreed on a list of criteria for selection of NGOs for the process. It has also recommended an AU-CSO pre-Summit meeting in Abuja, Nigeria, in January 2004, to further sensitize the African Civil Society community as partners to preparations for launching ECOSOCC and the requirements of participation. Arrangements are underway to hold this meeting between January 21-24, 2005.

I should also draw attention to the fact that budget allocations for ECOSOCC for 2005 did not include provisions for either the key sectoral clusters which are the operational engines of the process as provided in the Statutes or the consultative process for the post-interim ECOSOCC Assembly as specified in the same. These areas demand review because if ECOSOCC is launched without giving it the instruments it needs to make a positive contribution to the activities of the Union, its effectiveness would be undermined.

Engagement with the African Diaspora

During the last Ordinary Session of Council and Assembly in July 2004, I reported on the Technical Workshop on AU's relationship with the African Diaspora, that was held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, in fulfillment of the Executive Council Decision of Sun City in May 2003. The Workshop came out with specific recommendations on the Definition of the Diaspora, proposed a methodology for developing a global African skill database and measures for addressing the "brain drain" and other human capacity needs for capitalizing on the "brain gain", put forward suggestions and models for fund raising in the Diaspora to support programs and projects in Africa, including policy frameworks and investment vehicles, modalities for enhancing effective partnership between the African Union and the Diaspora and for the observance of commemorative days such as the Africa Day, etc as global events.

The recommendations of the Workshop have been reviewed by the Commission and translated into various working languages for review by Member States. The result of the reviews would consequently help to establish a cognitive map for advancing the Diaspora Initiative, involving the participation of all stakeholders.

Significantly also, Diaspora communities in various regions of the world have begun the process of collaboration through the setting up of alliances and regional Diaspora networks, as partners for engagement with the African Union. On 11-12 September 2004, twenty-one (21) Pan Africanist Organizations from 15 Caribbean met in Bridgetown, Barbados, to establish a Pan-Caribbean African network. Similar processes are underway in South and Central America and should become functional by March 2005 and one is being launched in Europe. A preparatory meeting has already been held in London in October 2004, as part of

European Social Forum and a convention of all Diaspora Groups in the United Kingdom that would feed into this process is scheduled for early next year.

Transformation of CSSDCA into CIDO

The Commission is also proceeding with plans for transformation of CSSDCA into CIDO as outlined in my last report. This reconfiguration is part and parcel of the process for implementation of the vision and mission document approved in principle by the Council and Assembly in July 2004. The change will ensure that the idea of a people-oriented African Union advanced by the Constitutive Act will be pursued more vigorously with greater institutional capacity. The implementation process requires enabling decisions at appropriate policy levels, supported by the necessary organizational adjustments.

The Way Forward

In the period under review, the CSSDCA has worked actively and with dedication and commitment to promote the ideal of a people-oriented Africa Union, as specified in the Constitutive Act. Its main agenda has been to establish ECOSOCC as key organ of the Union, to foster and consolidate links with African civil society organizations and the African Diaspora.

Six broad measures are required to support the fulfillment of these goals. They are as follows:

- a) Dedication and renewed commitment on the part of the Member States to the objective of the Constitutive Act, that *inter alia* stresses partnership with civil society and incorporation of the Diaspora;
- b) A clear appreciation by the Member States of the implications of their commitment, to civil society and the need to provide adequate material and other support.
- c) Member States support for the operationalization of ECOSOCC, including, the activation or establishment of key cluster committees, and the processes for representative elections in the post interim ECOSOCC Assembly;
- d) Approval and acceptance by the Member States of the definition of the Diaspora to enable Diaspora participation in ECOSOCC;
- e) Support by the Member States for deepening the process of the integration of the Diaspora in the framework of the AU, including the development, encouragement and consolidation of structures for effective partnership and for legitimate and credible Diaspora representation in ECOSOCC and in wider AU's structure and processes;
- f) Member State support for the transformation of CSSDCA into CIDO.