



Conclusions and Recommendations of the AU-CSO Continental Forum on Preparations for the Joint Annual Forum (JAF) of the Africa-EU Partnership, Djibouti, 18-20 September 2015

I. ON THE OUTCOMES OF THE AFRICA-EU SUMMIT OF BRUSSELS, 2-3 APRIL 2014

The Forum:

- a) **Took Note** of the two main Outcome Documents of the Brussels Summit, namely, the Roadmap 2014-2017 and the Declaration.
- b) **Recognized** that the Declaration was premised on the Roadmap.
- c) **Noted** also that the implementation mechanisms and structures contained in the Outcome Documents were essentially state-centred structures. These included Summit, ministerial meetings, College meetings between the two Commissions, Peace and Security Council to Political and Security Committee meetings and regular high level contacts between European and African leaders (Para 4 of the Roadmap)
- d) **Agreed** that the main exception was the framework of the Joint Annual Forums (JAF) which will replace the Joint Task Force of the previous partnership cycle and gather together all actors of partnership.
- e) **Observed** that the JAF will be the comprehensive stakeholder Forum for driving the people-centred aspirations of the Partnership and should therefore, be the appropriate mechanism for channeling, promoting and sustaining the activities of non-state and non-governmental actors.
- f) **Resolved** therefore, to ensure that it collaborates with other stakeholders to give the JAF an enhanced profile within the partnership process and to ensure an inclusive an active and robust civil society participation in this process.

II. RELATIONS WITH STATE ACTORS

The Forum:

- a) **Noted** the important profile of state actors in current efforts to define and shape JAF agenda and content.
- b) **Accepted** the Concept Paper that is being developed by both Commissions on the JAF as a baseline working document.
- c) **Underlined** the need for actors in civil society in the NGO community, among community based groups and organizations and RECs to play a critical and important role in lending content to JAF, defining its agenda and work program, its modalities of operation and the execution of its mandate.
- d) **Decided** to review the JAF concept paper in all its forms and make appropriate recommendations for its improvements, methods and outcomes.

III. **RECOMMENDATIONS ON JAF IN RELATION TO THE CONCEPT PAPER**

On Purpose and Objectives of JAF

The Forum:

- a) **Agreed** with the general objectives proposed for JAF which includes monitoring, review and assessment of actions and initiatives under the Joint Priorities contained in the Roadmap, promoting synergies between political dialogue and cooperation, harnessing related contributions from civil society and the private sector, inspiring congruence across horizontal themes and different strands of the partnership and acting as preparatory body for the political decision-makers fora.
- b) **Recommended** that in order to perform these functions, the orientation constitution, working methods and use of JAF outputs must be people-centred and people-driven in all its contours and aspirations. The inputs of civil society actors must be fully integrated into the framework of JAF.

Frequency and Location

The Forum:

- a) **Underscored** the need for JAF to be held annually as conceived in the Roadmap Plan of 2014-2017 in order to efficiently perform its functions.
- b) **Regretted** the undue delay in the activation of JAF process as undermining the essence and spirit of the Roadmap and Declaration.
- c) **Underlined** the need for at least two annual forums to be held in the current partnership cycle between now and the next Summit.
- d) **Called** on all parties and structures responsible for the planning process to accelerate the process of implementing JAF, particularly the two Commissions, to take necessary measures for its quick and effective implementation.
- e) **Recommended** that the venue for JAF be rotated among the two continents with the first in Africa and a second in Europe in the context of the two JAF stages recommended by the CSO Forum.
- f) **Emphasized** the need for the first JAF Forum to be held as soon as possible, preferably in the last quarter of 2015 or very early in the first quarter of 2016 to be followed by another in a time frame preceding the 2017 Summit.

Participation

The Forum:

- a) **Emphasized** that as the only comprehensive stakeholder platform JAF must necessarily be open to all stakeholders including state structures, organs of both Unions and the Kingdom of Morocco, continental parliaments, regional economic and political structures, AU ECOSOCC and EU ECOSOCC and civil society groups including the private sector, youth and women's organizations, academics, research institutes, think tanks, financial institutions, trade unions etc. from both continents.

- b) **Agreed** that the context of such participation must be in a continuum that includes preparation, consultation, definition of purpose, goals and the execution of outputs.
- c) **Proposed** also that each of the contributing parties will select its own representatives that will work with other stakeholders to define collective results.

Civil Society Interventions

- a) **Agreed** that there should be a coordinate and collaborative structure of civil society interventions to support this process.
- b) **Agreed** also that such interventions should include autonomous civil society activities to popularize the Africa-EU partnership, extend the reach and impact to the grassroots societies in both continents, work across the two continents to ensure effectiveness of CSO participation and strong contributions across state lines, and cooperation to expand civil society space in the process. Further agreed to the need to have regional CSO platforms for the dissemination of JAF outputs and the refinement and modification of implementation strategies.
- c) **Recommended** the conduct of regional Conferences on both sides for this purpose.
- d) **Agreed** on the need for the institutionalization of a civil society pre-JAF Forum to consolidate civil society positions ahead of every JAF and a pre-Summit Forum to coordinate civil society contributions before every Summit.
- e) **Proposed** the alignment use of the Pan-African civil Society envelop to support the framework of civil society interventions
- f) **Resolved** that civil society participation be mainstreamed upwards and downwards within JAF as rapporteurs and co-chairs where possible.

Configuration and process

- a) **Proposed** that duration of 2-3 days will be required for JAF to produce meaningful outcomes.

- b) **Requested** that the JAF process must involve effective representation of CSOs in the 5 thematic priority areas.
- c) **Recommended** that the definition of the agenda and work programme must be the effective product of wider stakeholders agreement and consultations.
- d) **Recommended** that each session should have Chairs and rapporteurs (from civil society) and the conclusions should be reported to and adopted by plenary and report back sessions.
- e) **Proposed** that inputs of seminars and regional conferences as well as institutions of the process must feed into such agenda and work programs.

Outputs

Concluded that the outputs of JAF should include assessment and progress reports on:

- (a) challenges, options and possible solutions as well as methods designed to address such challenges
- (b) discussions of thematic and strategic issues
- (c) agreements on reporting frameworks to assess the implementation of the roadmap
- (d) timetable of operations, feedbacks and corrective mechanism, and
- (e) effective employment of outputs to strengthen the framework of operations.

Beyond JAF

More significantly the Forum conclusion went beyond JAF to emphasize the need for effectively mainstreaming of CSO interventions in larger framework of the Africa-EU Joint Strategy (JAES). As part of this process, it stressed the need for civil society actors in Africa (as in Europe) to be involved in and contribute to the outcomes of the Africa-EU Summit on Migration scheduled to be held in Valetta, Malta, from 11-12 November 2015. The Forum observed that migrants were mostly from civil society and it is essential that civil society actors from developing countries, including Africa, should be an integral part of the search for solutions on attendant problems of state-society. The Forum in particular underlined the need

for an Africa Continental CSO Consultation on the Migration prior to the Summit as distinct from the side event that is being organized by Europeans organizations and the University of Malta. It stressed the need for assimilation of such issues effectively within the framework of the Intercontinental CSO dimension of the JAES process.