

**For Press**

## Statement of the African, Japanese and International Civil Society Organisations at TICAD IV

Yokohama, 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2008

TICAD IV takes place amidst rising food prices as a result of global shortages and runaway oil prices related to conflict in oil producing countries. The consequence of this will be greater strife at the local level resulting in mass protests, leading to conflict and possibly civil war in very fragile states. This context, together with the prevailing development challenges must inform our approach to all the issues at TICAD IV.

### MDGs

MDGs underline the fundamental need for social development in poverty reduction. In other words statistical economic growth alone is not enough for the sustainable reduction of poverty. Achieving the MDGs is not an end goal in itself. The associated provision of food security, education, gender equality, improving child and maternal health, reducing or eradicating diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and TB, will contribute to the reduction of poverty, desperation and misery which fuel instability and conflict thereby undermining development.

That the MDGs can be met is not in question. What is in question is if both developed countries and African governments can muster the political will to do so. In addition, as we heard yesterday, critical resource gaps stand in the way of the achievement of the MDGs. These resource gaps include the loss of medical personnel as the result of the brain drain experienced by many of our countries. It is our hope that the TICAD process will go a long way towards the bridging of these resource gaps.

No amount is too much to invest in human development. Africa is currently losing over 8 million lives a year to health related reasons and this is unacceptable. Investment in the MDGs should be seen as a kind of Marshall Plan for Africa – increased and sustained development support over the period necessary for the infrastructure for sustainable development to be in place.

It cannot be overstated that the MDGs cannot be achieved without the input and partnership of civil society. This partnership should be based on mutual respect and interdependence. Civil society involvement should not be tokenistic, but strategic and at all stages of key processes.

Much was said yesterday about democratisation in Africa. Africa has experienced some positive developments over the past decade, with at least twelve retired Presidents completing their constitutional terms and peacefully handing over power after elections. In addition several protracted conflicts have also been resolved. Such positive developments are premised on the realisation that democratisation depends on several factors. These include the existence of a leadership that understands and embraces democratic ideals; political institutions who are repositories and guarantors of democratic values; and civil society and international actors playing specific and clearly defined roles.

However, despite this, the recent events in South Africa have also indicated that even in a highly developed country like South Africa, with a relatively strong economy, and institutionalised democratic structures, huge gaps in income, high unemployment and continuing poverty for the majority of people will threaten such strong foundations of democracy.

The challenge therefore for all emerging democracies, especially, those in Africa is to ensure that democratic consolidation is embarked upon alongside redistributive development. There can be no long term peace in Africa without redistributive development. TICAD IV has to put back the issue of democratisation on its agenda and link it with peace and development. African countries and their partners have to evolve developmental agendas complimented by forms of governance that promote democratic, responsible, participation.

Overwhelming concerns were expressed yesterday about the current food crisis resulting from factors including the changing food consumption patterns in the world, the rising price of crude oil and other sources of energy along long term structural issues relating to the agricultural sectors of developing countries.

Some of the implications of the current food crisis include rising inflation, unemployment, increased insecurity and social strife. We heard yesterday from several heads of state that the food crisis has the potential to role back the progress which Africa has made in terms of economic development, peace and security.

The increase in food prices has hit particularly the urban poor who are increasingly spending more on food or have reduced the number of meals consumed. The price increases have also affected the rural poor who have to spend more on other commodities and for access to services like transport and communication. Women, children and people living with the diseases like HIV/AIDS, TB, Malaria are among the most marginalised in the wake of the rising food prices.

What then is the role of civil society as a development partner, given the prevailing context?

Civil Society is regarded as the foundation of liberty, agents for promoting political values, and advocates for social justice, democratic participation, good governance and conflict resolution. They play an important role in both democratic transition and consolidation. In order for civil society to effectively play this role, they need to be self-regulating, autonomous of the State, and need to subscribe to a set of common rules that guide and regulate their activities. They also act as channels through which citizens articulate their interests and concerns. Civil society also influences social change, through encouraging the State to make structural changes and to produce policy outputs that enhance common social interests. However, the role of civil society in the democratisation process can be hampered by dependence on external funding, hostile governments, and issues such as ethnicity, religion and gender bias.

With respect to the current food crisis civil society entities have an important contribution to make in national efforts to address the crisis. The unique positioning of civil society among affected communities, its work in the areas of research and analysis as well as advocacy efforts with national, regional and global policy making institutions, make civil society a credible and effective partner in many instances. We urge the organisers of the TICAD process, national governments and regional organisations to maximise on this partnership opportunity.

Yesterday, our esteemed Excellencies invited the Government of Japan and their development partners in general to partner with African countries in the fight to enhance human security by eradicating poverty and consolidating democracy on the continent. In so doing, African and Japanese civil society participating on the TICAD process have repeated the observations raised previously. Our concerns centre around the fact that assistance to Africa should not recreate the debt crisis from which some of our economies have recently emerged, and from which have yet to emerge.

Esteemed participants, with respect to the TICAD Action Plan and the Follow Up Mechanism; we echo the numerous calls from our heads of States yesterday that the Plan of Action should be comprehensive, time bound, implementable and measurable. With respect to the Follow Up Mechanism, right from its inception at TICAD III, the participation of civil society was always envisioned. However, Japanese and African Civil Society have noted with disappointment the omission of civil society as participants in the proposal for the Follow Up Mechanism which has been distributed here. Given the extent to which the organisers of the TICAD process have sought to involve civil society to date, we have no doubt that this was a simple oversight and respectfully urge the organisers to make the necessary amendment and confirm the participation of civil society in the Mechanism.

Finally, TICAD V must strive to place people centered development at the core of its agenda and become a forum for a true partnership among the State, the private sector and civil society.

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