



Message from the TICAD Civil Society Forum toward the TICAD Conference on Consolidation of Peace in Africa

Issue

At the very moment at which this conference is being convened, armed conflicts are going on throughout Africa, and thousands of African people are losing their lives or are pitted against disasters and sufferings. Frequency of armed conflicts is showing a trend to decline in the whole world, yet we can see frequent outbreak of armed conflicts in Africa, which are causing grave damages. Among regions in the world, the number of victims in Africa caused by armed conflicts, directly or indirectly, is overwhelming. Most of them are civilians, in other words, common people in Africa. Armed conflicts are worsening poverty as well as other problems in Africa, making it difficult to solve them. It is no one else but African people who are faced with these problems and are to address them.

As a civil society forum that is hoping to serve as a bridge between African people and Japanese civilians, the TICAD Civil Society Forum calls upon:

- any actors to stop their involvement in armed conflicts immediately as a premise to discuss on 'consolidation of peace in Africa' in Addis Ababa, and;
- the international community to make every effort for conflict resolution.

Confirming these points, we would like to bring an issue toward plenary sessions of the TICAD conference, that is, the lack of recognition of civil society at the plenary sessions.

Should only governments be actors for 'consolidation of peace'?

At plenary sessions, civil societies are permitted to be sitting only as 'observers'. Should actors for 'consolidation of peace' be limited to governments, international organizations or donors?

While the definition of 'consolidation of peace' may be varied, the role of civil society is significant in this area, assuming 'consolidation of peace' to be '**foundation-building in order to prevent conflict from recurring**'. For, when conflicts end with signing peace agreement among actors of conflict, hardworking activities over years are essential in order to 'consolidate peace' in the society which was seriously affected by conflict and greatly uprooted. Could governments afford to practice all those activities by their own?

As many researchers and activists on the ground point out, civil societies should be regarded as actors to serve as a bridge between nation and people in regions, and as 'key' actors, not as 'complementary', for the reconstruction of socio-economic system in post-conflict phases.

Are African civil societies unimportant?

The Chairperson's Summary of TICAD III (the third Tokyo Conference on African Development) reports:

'The Conference agreed on the necessity for a comprehensive approach emphasizing concepts such as **reviving communities and ensuring human security** in activities to consolidate peace (e.g., disarmament, demobilization, and **reintegration** (DDR), support for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), the reintegration of child soldiers, de-mining, and the regulation of small arms).'

The Japanese government also expressed in its *Cooperation Policy for Africa* in October 2004: 'human security, **promotion of support for communities** – using "the Human Security Fund" set up at Japan's initiatives, Japan supports nation-building activities through **human-capacity-building and society-building** by protecting people and reinforcing capacity.

Who should take major roles in the areas of 'steady reconstruction of socio-economic system', 'reintegration of former combatants into communities', 'reviving communities and ensuring human security', 'human building' and 'society-capacity-building'? Shouldn't they be African people and African civil societies? For 'consolidation of peace' in Africa, African people and societies are key players as well as actors for 'consolidation of peace' in Africa. On the other hand, however, African civil societies are just 'observers' at plenary sessions of this conference. In addition, it was only a handful of entities from vast Africa that are allowed to attend at the sessions.

How is the Japanese government regarding civil societies ?

In deciding humanitarian relief activities by the United Nations and international humanitarian agencies, the Advisory Council on International Peace Cooperation (*Kokusai Heiwa Kyouryoku Kondankai* in Japanese) formed by the Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi in 2002 set out to 'take all possible measures such as **promotion of dialogues between the government and NGOs** in order to ensure presence of NGOs in Japan'. Nevertheless, this commitment has not been realized although three years have already passed. Likewise, at plenary sessions, are NGOs being treated as equal partners for such dialogues? The answer is no. **NGOs are still only 'observers'**.

Nowadays, civil societies have become co-hosts as indispensable partners and are official participants at most international conferences in the world. Yet, at Japan-initiated TICAD conferences in the past as well as present time, civil societies still remain just 'observers' at plenary sessions. African civil societies, who are parties for development of Africa, are forced to remain as 'observers'. Why does this happen?

The disregard by the Japanese government of civil societies is characteristic not only in the TICAD process, but also in Japan's assistance policies. **Assistance via civil societies in Japan is**

only 2-4% of the total aid volume although the value can be slightly changed depending on the method of calculation. Considering that the average of whole OECD assistances is 14-15%, we can see how small this volume for assistance via civil societies is.

Assertion of TICAD Civil Society Forum

The TICAD Civil Society Forum was formed during the TICADIII by people from various civil societies in Africa and Japan, who questioned the lack of recognition of civil societies in the TICAD process.

This time when TICAD conference is convened with the focus on 'consolidation of peace' in which civil societies should play crucial roles, we insist that civil societies in the fields should be listened to as official participants, not just as 'observers', and should be involved in discussions officially in future as well as at this time.

Moreover, if future conferences associated with the TICAD are not to be just forum of diplomatic ceremony, but are to be places for dialogues for actors to attempt to realize true peace and prosperity in Africa, honest voices from civil societies in the fields and the official involvement of them in dialogues are crucial. Voices from civil societies might found too critical to ears of government officials. Still, opinions based on activities at field level are of necessity in order to choose better options. It is obvious that African civil societies are already playing significant roles in the process of poverty eradication from the aspects of grass-root activities and policy recommendation. Therefore, we urge the Japanese government and co-hosts of the TICAD to permit civil societies to be involved in decision making while supporting activities of civil societies.

Messages from civil societies in Africa and Japan

Attached document provides messages from NGOs in Japan and Africa which are active in the field of 'consolidation of peace' in Africa. Though they are only a part of civil societies, we hope that real voices that come out from experiences in the fields will be listened to with the most care. At the same time, we strongly hope that civil societies will be able to obtain recognition as official partners next time.

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