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A PICTURE OF THE AFRICAN SOCIAL FORUM PROCESS

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Preface :

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A picture of the WSF process in Africa

Out of the 6 billion people in the world, some 850 million live in Africa. Africa has tremendous resources and based on this it should be among the richest continents in the world.

According to the UNDP Human Development Report 2002, in some of the indebted countries where 70 per cent of the people are impoverished, the governments pay up to 60 per cent of their budgets in debt service. The national income of some of these countries has fallen by 30, 40 or even 50 per cent during the nineties and in others a good 20 per cent of the adult population suffers from HIV/AIDS. The information that furthermore comes our way via the UNDP reports is that the African population is very much infected with HIV/Aids.

Now, the WSF is coming to Africa with the polycentric event in Bamako, Mali and the WSF 2007 Kenya. The forum coming to Kenya was a request of the East African sub region of the Africa Social Forum process.

The structural adjustment programs of the Bretton Woods Institutions began in Latin America and spread through Subsaharan Africa to the rest of the African continent. One reason behind the birth of the WSF process has been a deep dissatisfaction with these programs. Today every African country has experienced structural adjustment programs in some form at some point. It is commented also therefore as interesting that the WSF spreads from Latin America to and through Africa.

So reads the news item in The Nation newspaper of Nairobi, announcing the upcoming WSF forum on the 19th of July:

"Kenya is to host the next World Social Forum.

Nairobi won the bid to stage what is considered the world's largest conference - which annually brings together over 300,000 delegates from social and civil society movements operating in all parts of the world. The WSF, as the conference is called is traditionally held in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, save for 2004 when it moved to Mumbai, India.

In a world which is increasingly seen by some as the playground of global big capital to the detriment of the rest of humanity, the WSF platform has emerged as a strong counterweight to the World Economic Forum (WEC), which is annually held in the Swiss city of Davos.

Tourism boost

The major coup by Kenya in winning the bid was achieved on the back of international recognition and strong lobbying by some of its leading civil society figures, among them Wahu Kaara (All Africa Conference of Churches), Prof Edward Oyugi (Social Development Network - Kenya), Oduor Ongwen (SEATTINI). The bid was supported by Fatuma Aloo of Femnet Tanzania and Uganda's Elizabeth Eilor (Awepon).

Mr Ongwen said the conference would be a major boost to Kenyan tourism and overall economic development, putting their total projected spending at over Sh10 billion. "Imagine bringing in 20 per cent of all tourists who visit Kenya annually to Nairobi in one week for this extravaganza."

Mrs Kaara said the hosting of the conference in Africa would give the best platform for its mission of "sculpting a more equitable world" and amplifying the world's betrayal by the rich North. They called for cooperation from the regional governments and non-state organizations to make the event a success."

The nature of the above newspaper clipping points to a (criticized) bidding climate accompanying the choice of the WSF hosting country. It is however important to know, that the decision for Kenya to be hosting WSF 2007 was a decision made in the Regional Council of the Africa process, which joins 40 representatives from 40 different regions (see more below).

There is already a WSF process in Africa since the preparations for January 2002, when the first African Social Forum was held in Bamako, Mali, under the banner of "Another Africa is possible". Since then various sub regional, national and thematic initiatives have sprung forth, and even community social forums as held in Kenya. Twenty five national forums are reported to have taken place so far. It is reported that African representatives already spoke of a WSF to be held in Africa at the first WSF International Council in 2001.

After the second ASF held in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia in 2003, a third African Social Forum was held in Lusaka, Zambia in December 2004, attracted approximately 650 social movement activists from across sub-Saharan Africa. There was significant representation from South Africa, Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, and Nigeria, and smaller delegations from Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and other countries, the largest delegation coming from Zimbabwe. Working languages of the forum were English, French, Portuguese, Arabic and Swahili.

1. The positive potential of the WSF global event coming to Africa

Opinions seem to be positive as to the potential of the annual "global" WSF going to Africa. Some point to how now, when so much attention has been going to Africa as during the G8 summit and the release of the report of the UK Africa Commission with however disputed results, the WSF coming to Africa would be an instance to in a right manner put the spotlight on Africa.

"Both the Mali and Kenya WSFs, 2006 and 2007 provide an ideal stage for Africa to raise pertinent issues affecting the continent, such as HIV/AIDS, Land disputes, corruption, bio-piracy, GMOs, EPAs, Natural resource commercialization and Debt among other issues. Africa would do well to use this stage, which will shift Global focus on Africa, to raise voices of millions of marginalised communities wallowing in abject poverty and demand for a just world. We therefore feel it is ideal that the WSF is coming to Africa. The reality and consequences of trade imbalances, debt, HIV/AIDS, misgovernance, corruption and other critical issues affecting Africa will be best discussed and appreciated on the African soil," says Emmanuel Mutamba, Green Living Movement, Zambia.

Others point to the positive effect on the organization and coming together of civil society groups in light also of the organisation of the WSF. So its reported from Kenya that civil society groups from different sectors are currently working together in Nairobi who never met before.

Commented is that this is particularly important at this moment, "Kenya is going through big changes which is having its effects in all sectors, and political identities are being shaped. Having the World Social Forum in Kenya can bring Kenyans together. A new constitution has been drafted via a process including civil society hearings. However, various sectors have been left behind and there is expectations of the forum bringing their voices to the stage," said Gathurum Mburu, Forum for Urban Ecology, Kenya. In three months a referendum will be held on the newly drafted constitution.

Other comments on the WSF context of Kenya are that "Kenya is at the cross roads of either delivering a constitution that will be the bane for all the future democratic processes or a total tragedy (main reason being that vernacular groups do not seem to see beyond local linguistic politics). For this reason, it would be interesting to get these same groupings deliberate issues that are a common threat to them, whilst at the same time offering a platform from within which those local differences could be harnessed positively for their own good and at a common enemy," commented Peter K, Siemenpuu foundation, Finland.

Yet others point to the possibility the WSF presents to display and get attention for the alternatives, for those alternatives and solutions envisioned and debated in Africa for Africa. The Regional Council of the African Social forum states that the Forum will "create a popular critical mass which will compel the internal and external political forces to take this expression into account. It will thus greatly influence the future of the continent in terms of a democratic reconstruction and the rehabilitation of citizens...it will constitute a high point for building new solidarities among the peoples, in which the continent will be fully present."

And yet others point to the importance of getting to know the African movements. This not only being an aspect for those from outside the African continent. Also within the African continent, learning from each others experiences and analysis can be a valuable experience for African organisations and movements meeting under the umbrella of the WSF.

Pointed is also to the potential for mass international mobilisation coming forth out of the meetings held on the African continent.

The forum is said to be an opportunity to show another Africa and all the good things that come forth out of it, and its of great importance that this will be done by Africans to Africans, to regain strength and pride. Nairobi is a socially very divided city and it is commented as good the Forum will take place there and surely also highlight this.

The African social forum adheres to the WSF Charter of Principles, and has further more developed an own Charter after the first two African social forum in 2001 and 2002 (See Annex 1. Charter of the African Social Forum).

The African Social Forum has a Secretariat maintained by Enda (Environment and Development in the Third World, current plans are to expand the Secretariat to 4 full time working people) and a Regional African Social Forum Council was set up formally in 2004 during a meeting in Cairo. The members of the council are organisations which have taken national, sub-regional and thematic initiatives, members of the African Social Forum's organising committee as well as social movements organised at continental level.

Taufik Ben Abdallah, Enda, said that currently there are 3 strong ideas within the

African regional council on what the Africa WSF 2007 process should contribute to: (1) Autonomy for the continent, sovereignty, in particular regarding the international financial institutions; (2) to consolidate citizenship (in many African countries the concept of citizenship is hollow), (3) to work on African unity, to profit from the diversity of participants to get to something in common.

The WSF IC is underrepresented with regards to African organisations. Only 6,3% of the headquarters of organisations in the WSF IC are located in Africa. Currently a revision of the criteria for IC membership is on going. However, certain for membership applying organisations, including African organisations, are in the mean time receiving IC membership to correct the imbalances.

2. Regional African Social Forum Council : Defining the (collective action) themes in the WSF Africa process

The Council was founded in Cairo at a meeting in July 2004, with 35 organisations present from South Africa, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Morocco, Mali, Mozambique, Central African Republic, Senegal, Tanzania, Tunisia, and Uganda. It has been reported that important actors are networks as the Jubilee campaigns, Action Aid and Friends of the Earth.

The council of today 40 members has as a purpose to serve as the Forum's discussion and decision-making space and it proposes the issues and themes around which the ASF activities are mobilised. The latter presents a difference from the current (not previous) workings of the WSF (and the Americas social forum as well as the Asian social forum), in which the definition of the themes is the result of a consultation process. Membership of the open council depends on both WSF and ASF charter adherence, but does not have representativity as a criteria and members is meant to come from a broad range of organisations.

As the WSF IC, also the African Council has to deal with issues as representativity and transparency. The Council is mentioned to be in a process of enlarging its membership.

At the founding meeting of the Council in 2004, the Council members defined what were the main challenges facing the African continent : The dictatorship of neo-liberal policies and the policy geared towards the militarization of the management of the world Triad (Europe, United States and Japan), under the leadership of the American Empire.

Four main themes were defined which would guide the African Forum activities at the Lusaka African social forum in Dec 2004, and at the WSF 2005 in Porto Alegre:

- 1- The land issue and the future of peasant societies.
- 2- The reconstruction of the United Labour Front.
- 3- National Sovereignty and Democracy
- 4- Reconstructing the United Front of Peoples of the Third World.

Further discussions took place highlighting several aspects which should be guiding the programing in the forums as for instance the need to have a critical attitude towards the Africa Union, the need to connect as well as the need to project another image of Africa. Discussions had an emphasis on the formulations of alternatives and within this a particular emphasis on the role of culture.

Several themes were further defined around which African forum activities would engage in collective action at the forums in Lusaka and in Porto Alegre. These themes were:

- a) Sovereignty and democracy
- b) Land issue and peasant farming
- c) Reconstruction of the labor front
- d) Pan-Africanism in question
- e) Reconstruction of the United Front of Peoples of the South
- f) African Women's Tribunal
- g) Art and Culture
- h) Media and communication
- f) The alternatives formulated by the African organisations.

Participants in the African social forum process organise selforganised activities and links are promoted between these activities and the collective activities. The African social forum process has always also attempted to facilitate a maximum participation of Africans in the "global" WSF events, which has been in increasing numbers over the years. It has been perceived as very important to be present and give visibility to the African issues.

The Regional Council decided on the hosting of the Africa WSF 2007 in Kenya, and is in general the space for the African Social Forum process to make decisions.

Kenyan organisations involved in the WSF process have put up a Secretariat for the WSF 2007 organisation. It has been reported that the organisations are making effort to inform about the WSF process and invite movements from the different sectors aboard. "A coordinator has been hired. Research is going on regarding the mapping out of the available residential facilities, meeting sites, transport, security ... The response is overwhelming. Many civil society formations are involved. These include the ecumenical community, Bunge la Wananchi, People Against Torture, Social Development Network and its membership across the country, KENREN, SEATINI and many others," says Prof Edward Oyugi, director of the Social Development Network and member of the organizing committee of the forum in Kenya.

3. The polycentric WSF 2006 in Mali

Proposals are at the moment for the forum in Mali to be held from the 18th to 22nd of January, 2006. Bamako is hosting other grand scale meetings during the period coinciding with the WEF, and furthermore believed is that as such those who want can take place in more than one WSF. It has been commented that the press is also an important factor to consider, as the "one and only" alterglbalization journalist from some major media will not be able to be in two places at the same time, and if required to do so, the forum of Caracas might win over Mali.

A spokesman of the forum process in Mali, Barry Aminata Touré (CAD Mali), reported that Malians are very enthusiastic about the forum to be hosted next year in Mali.

The preparatory process for the polycentric WSF 2006 is now some two months underway. After a general assembly of Malian Social movements, different bodies have been formed : A national council (formed by one representative of each of the hundred organisations taking part in the council), an organisation committee (formed by one representative of each of the 11 working commissions), and a coordination committee which is recruiting its personnel. The more than hundred members of the national council of the polycentric WSF in Mali are reported to be from all sectors of society.

There are meetings of organising committees and assemblies for the exchange of information and decision making on the level of national Mali Social Forum council level. Touré told that there are different challenges facing the process. One is the challenge of getting the involved actors fully informed about the process, as the WSF is not familiar to all.

4. Challenges and tensions within the WSF Africa process

Politically the challenges for the WSF process wanting to promote the autonomy of civil society in Africa are considerable. As Antonio Martins (ATTAC Brasil) from the WSF Secretariat puts it, the fact that there have been already 3 African Social Forum involving more than 30 countries is therefore very positive. However, participation has not been massive and mainly leaders convened in the meetings. The great challenge is to mobilise civil society and believed is that the WSF of 2007 can give a new impetus to the African Social Forum movement. Material conditions are of course also a challenge in the African WSF process. Conditions also in the sense of the conditions for contact and dialogue between the African countries. However, Martins believes the WSF process will be able to engage great international solidarity in support of the common objectives behind the holding of the WSF in Africa.

A. On (the nature of) participation throughout the African social forum process. Turnout

The turnout for the Lusaka forum was not as large as hoped for (650 participants), however a considerable increase from the previous year. It should be noted that some national forums gather larger crowds, as for instance did the forum in Nigeria, 2000 participants. Needless to say the holding of an African Social forum of the continent of Africa is a huge challenge.

In his article "Africa Social Forum 2004 - whose Forum, which Africa?" Miles Larmer writes on the participation in the African Social Forum that "One solution undoubtedly lies in the organisation of national Social Forums. It was noticeable that those countries that had held such events in the run-up to the ASF (Zimbabwe, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, and Malawi) tended to contribute to the ASF in a more coherent and focused way. The capacity to hold such events is naturally reflective of the tempo of the struggle in various countries: Kenyan activists, still on the offensive following the ousting of the Moi regime in 2003, and pressing home their advantage with its successor, also organised 'community social forums' in the poorest areas of Nairobi. In Nigeria, where a series of general strikes over petrol subsidies have coincided with an increased radicalization of the struggle in the Niger Delta, 3,000 delegates attended the national Social Forum.... At the same time, the sharing and generalising of experiences is necessary to give voice to an Africa-wide social movement."

Needless to say available funds have a big role to play. Criticism is voiced by African activists on the dependency forthcoming from attending the forum for many being possible only by ways of the funding of northern organisations.

South African radical activist Trevor Nwagane told that a proposal is being worked out for the WSF 2007 to facilitate mass participation via bus caravans throughout the African continent, which would without a doubt have a positive effect on the nature of participation.

"We are noticing an encouraging development in the African Social Forum process which

is demonstrated by the organisation of national and regional forums. Certain critiques remain grounded as is the case regarding the democratisation of the ASF. There is on going effort to make the FSA a process carried by mass mobilisation and the popular social movements. In our opinion, this democratisation is first of all the responsibility of the African social movement,” says, a spokesperson of the forum process in Mali, Barry Aminata Touré (CAD Mali).

NGO and Social Movements

Another aspect of participation in the WSF Africa process concerns the participation of NGOs versus social movements. Trevor Nwgame, in his essay on the WSF “WSF 2007 in Africa must build a mass movement against capitalism” writes on how also seemingly the African forum process is dominated by NGOs rather than by grassroot organisations and social movements.

Tied to this, comes a new feature of the WSF: In contrast to the three first WSFs, the WSF itself does not organise an official program as such any more. Rather, the WSF is composed of hundreds or even thousands of self organised activities, like workshops and seminars according to the WSF methodology (see WSF Methodology).

“The WSF governing structures - its international council and secretariat - are unwittingly allowing the marginalisation and eclipse of social movements by their hands-off, laissez-faire approach to the organisation of events and activities in the WSF space. Thus the Global-Campaign Against Poverty campaign was able to steal the show during the WSF 2005 because Oxfam, Action Aid, the United Nations and other agencies had the resources to secure Lula's time and overwhelm the proceedings with their giant-sized zeppelins and hundreds of thousands of brochures and pamphlets.” writes Trevor.

Also within the International Council these dynamics led to debates regarding the issue as to what attracts visibility during the WSF and most probably some events will be co-organized by WSF organizers and participants.

It should however be noted that it has been exactly the aim of the WSF to bring the NGO's and social movements together. The WSF and the WSF IC have been comparatively broad based, so that the people's movements have been participating from the birth of the WSF process.

“...I do not think that the African Social Forum can be a replacement of NGO networks. ASF is a space for a multiplicity of actors - NGOs, CBOs, social movements, Trade Unions, Faith-based organisations - and as such has a wider agenda than NGO work. ASF can and does provide space for the NGOs to better network, “ comments Oduor Ong'wen, SEATINI Kenya and member of the Kenyan organizing committee.

In 2003, Mondli Hlatshwayo circulated his reflections on ASF in a piece entitled “The African Social Forum-A tale of two forces” wherein he concluded that: “...The ASF has two distinct forces. There are those forces that are radical in character. These forces are largely from Southern Africa. They have attracted very few individuals and organizations in Kenya and Ethiopia. It has to be said that these progressive forces were the minority in the ASF. “Therefore there is a need to strengthen these forces in other regions of Africa particularly in Francophone countries. The other forces are led by NGOs that are not articulating the interests of the toiling masses.”

As Hlatshwayo points to, critique has been often of an ASF agenda set by international

NGO's, with perhaps important action points, but not necessarily allowing African civil society to define their own agenda. A similar criticism concerns the featured speakers.

One aspect of this is of course as many Southern countries are faced with: the dependency on the Northern funders. So for instance ASF process meetings get held in the places where invitations are offered to.

Taoufik Ben Abdallah, active WSF IC member and representative of ENDA in the WSF Africa process, which also holds the Secretariat of the WSF Africa process, says however that the WSF Africa process is an autonomous project, and as such disagreeing with the principle of Western NGO's guiding a passive African dependent partner.

He points to the fact that the WSF Africa process of course has to deal with huge challenges. There is no strong organised civil society and conditions are often found lacking but the 25 national social forums that take place in Africa are autonomous projects. The process needs to be supported to expand.

Dot Keet (Alternative Information and Development Center, South Africa) in 2004 posed the questions "whether Africa has, or rather which African countries have the organisational means and the mass movement base to maintain and contribute further to the patterns of participation and levels of action already established in Brazil and India as being so crucial to the credibility, the aims and the impact of the WSF; and, whether taking up the mammoth responsibility of organising and hosting a world social forum will at this stage of African popular social/political organisations act as an inspiration and a stimulation towards the urgently needed and often very preliminary development of organised mass social forces in most African countries, and the effective activation of such forces."

Trevor Nwagane in his essay on the WSF further writes that : "We should use the build-up to the WSF 2007 to build and strengthen the social movements in Africa. We need a programme of action for this momentous task. We should broaden and strengthen the ASF as the tool to co-ordinate this work. Maximum internal democracy, accountability, collective leadership and mass participation are crucial in building the ASF. NGOs and research institutes are important and welcome in the ASF but only those who agree to the primacy of mass organisations in the struggle; only those who privilege methods of struggle which actively involve the rank and file rather than rely on few specialists to fight it out. The WSF 2007 in Africa should be structured logistically, organisationally and politically to favor the social movements and their daily struggles."

"I think the (ASF) network brings together social movements which have either graduated from or at the point of graduating from NGOism with all its political limitations. All manner of social organisations are involved. Grass roots social organisation and NGO's dominate the scene. Trade union movements are beginning to be a distinct feature of the Forum. For instance, COSATU of South Africa, and COTU of Kenya are already members not only of their respective national/regional fora but more importantly of the ASF," says Edward Oyugi, director of the Social Development Network and member of the organizing committee of the forum in Kenya.

(No) Statement

Activists from South Africa's Social Movements Indaba (SMI) issued a statement after the ASF in 2004 in Lusaka which connected another aspect to the issue of NGO versus social movement participation to which also Trevor was pointing in his previously quoted comment: "The under representation of social movements in relation to NGOs is reflected

in the political content of the forum. It manifests in the persistence of the notion that the Africa Social Forum is nothing other than a space, in contrast to the perspective that it should have a programme to advance our struggle against neoliberalism."

The ASF adheres to the Charter of the WSF by which the WSF does not issue any statements in name of the forum. Yet the ASF of Bamako (2002) and Adis Abeba (2003) did issue a declaration and a consensus respectively. During the Addis Abeba forum in 2003, the African Social forum adopted its charter, which referred to the fact that no statements are to be issued in the name of the forum.

The first African Social Forum held in Bamako, Mali in January 2002, issued a Declaration, "Another Africa is Possible". The Bamako Forum took place at a time when certain African presidents, were pushing for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) to become the economic policy for the continent and the African Social Forum issued a response: According to the Bamako declaration: "initiatives such as Nepad are inspired by the IMF-World Bank strategies of Structural Adjustment Programmes, trade liberalisation that continues to subject Africa to an unequal exchange, and strictures on governance borrowed from the practices of Western countries and not rooted in the culture and history of the peoples of Africa."

The second African Social forum took place in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) in 2003. Over 200 people from 40 countries participated. The Bamako Declaration was reaffirmed at the meeting and a 3 pages Addis Ababa consensus was drawn up in which amongst other the principles of an alternative development paradigm were laid out which included strong stances on various issues as Debt and the WTO. Amongst the principles for an alternative development paradigm was also that "The development of the ASF (should be ed.) based on the participation of grassroots social movements, supported by NGOs, institutions and professionals who act in line with the principles of the ASF."

No statement was issued at the third African Social Forum, held in Lusaka, Zambia in December 2004, which attracted approximately 650 social movement activists from across sub-Saharan Africa.

Also in the meetings of the WSF IC, this issue comes up as part of the WSF and Strategy debate Taoufik Ben Abdallah (Enda) has expressed repeatedly in WSF International Council meetings that the WSF for the forum should be "more than a talkshop" if it comes to Africa, and should pronounce itself for instance on the international financial institutions whose condemned practices are having such visible effects in Africa.

Aminata Barry Touré (Mali forum process) wrote that "The principles of the World Social Forum do not allow the making of a common statement. But, the WSF is in a process which is developing. In its last meetings, there have been declarations made by groups around certain positions. Regional forums are based on certain problems and specific demands. The Forum of the People in Mali is an activity that has the G8 summits in focus and always a statement is made."

Trevow Nwgame wrote that "The WSF 2007 in Africa cannot afford to be a talk-shop. We should consider a specific concrete campaign and outcome which will benefit the African masses practically. Some have suggested linking the WSF 2007 with the call for the actual cancellation of the debt and the struggle for reparations. I personally support this approach as it unites us with Africans in the diaspora who are also fighting for reparations. But whatever specific campaign we decide upon, be it HIV/AIDS linked to gender equality or trade, we must not forget the analogy of the birds in the cage. The

WSF in Africa must help us gather the social forces and build the power to destroy the cage rather than buy us the, freedom of one bird.”

There is no contradiction between regional statements and a global open space. We want Africa to have a sense of direction of where we want to go to, but it would be premature to close space at the global level,” says Yash Tandon, director of South Centre.

It remains to be seen how the issue of the WSF open space, in particular the fact that no statements nor calls for action are issued in the name of the forum, will be worked out with the polycentric WSF in Mali, and in the WSF in 2007 in Kenya. A reading of the current opinions suggests there will be for sure strong voices demanding for the forum ”to speak”.

Others however remain convinced that there can be great potential in the grand mobilisations via international campaigns coming forth out of the upcoming WSF events in Africa with out the need for common statements or end documents, which would for them unnecessarily and unproductively lead to the need to choose from the diversity of themes and issues present at the WSF.

And for the defenders of the Open Space, of in particular the WSF as not issuing of any statements, the novelty of the WSF process lies exactly in its bringing together of a diverse spectrum of different kind of organisations, NGO’s and movements with different orientations. A global common policy line would force many to step out from the whole process which would marginalise the whole WSF process.

Annex 1. Charter of principles and values of the African Social Forum¹

After evaluating the results obtained and hopes aroused by the two editions of the African Social Forum (ASF), (organised in Bamako in January 2002 and Addis Ababa in January 2003), the initiators of the ASF considered it necessary to define a Charter of principles and values which establishes the political and moral bases of this collective space, and provide guidance for the continuation of this initiative.

The Principles contained in this Charter, which shall be observed by all those desiring to participate in the Forum and organise activities within it, are in conformity with the ideals that guided the realisation of the two editions of the African Social Forum and defined the new political and moral orientations.

1. The African Social Forum is an open meeting space aimed at deepening reflections, democratic debate, formulating proposals, experiences and articulation of efficient actions, entities and African social movements which are opposed to neo-liberalism, injustice and the domination of the world by market forces.
2. The Bamako Forum was a high point in the existence of the African social movement during which we agreed and proclaimed that « another Africa is possible. » This creed which is also our hobbyhorse shall guide us in the search for and construction of alternatives to the domination and plundering of the continent.
3. The African Social Forum shall speak as a continental body. Thus all the meetings that contribute to this process shall also have a regional dimension.
4. The alternatives proposed by the African Social Forum shall be focussed on the human person and opposed to the merchandising of Africa and the selling off of its riches within the framework of neo-liberal globalisation. The latter is particularly beneficial to the major multinational firms, rich nations and international institutions at the latter's service. The Forum thus objects to the programmes and initiatives launched on behalf of the continent which, in fact, establish the domination of the financial, political and cultural hegemonic forces.
5. The Forum shall, more specifically, campaign in favour of an interdependent African integration based, on the one hand, on the respect of the rights of men and women, minority rights, democracy, the principles of a sustainable development, and on the other, on democratic institutions at the service of interests of the continent, social justice, equality and people's sovereignty.
6. The African Social Forum shall bring together and connect civil society entities and movements from all African countries, but shall not claim to be representative of the African civil society or exclude from its debates political leaders, mandated by the peoples, who accept to make commitments resulting from this Charter.

¹ Taken from the official website of the Africa Social forum process
<http://www.africansocialforum.org/english/charte.htm>

7. Meetings of the African Social Forum do not have voting powers. No one shall therefore be authorised to speak on behalf of the Forum, no matter in what form, by presenting viewpoints claiming to be those of the ASF. As members of the Forum, participants shall not take decisions by vote or acclamation, nor approve declarations or proposals for action which bind the Forum.

8. Entities partaking in the Forum proceedings should however be able to deliberate freely during these meetings, alone or with other participants, about declarations and actions which they decide to develop . The world social forum shall undertake to widely circulate these decisions, through the means at its disposal, without imposing directions, hierarchies, censures and restrictions, but as proceedings of entities or groups of entities which would have assumed them.

9. The African Social Forum is a pluralist and diversified, non confessional, non governmental and non partisan space, which links, in a decentralised way and in networks, entities and movements engaged in concrete actions, from the local to the international level, for the construction of another Africa and another world. It shall therefore not establish itself as a governing body for participants during its meetings, nor shall it claim to be the only mode of articulation and action for entities and movements that participate in it.

10. As a meeting space, the Forum is open to pluralism and the diverse commitments and actions of participating entities and movements, such as gender, racial, ethnic and cultural diversity .

11. The African Social Forum believes in the power of democracy as the preferred channel for conflict renegotiation and resolution within societies and between States. Participants to the Forum shall undertake to strengthen participation and citizen control.

12. The African Social Forum shall reject any form of totalitarian and reductionist vision of history and the use of violence by States or any other social or political force. It shall put forward the respect of Human Rights, equitable, interdependent and peaceful relations among peoples, sexes and races, and condemn all forms of domination as well as the subjugation of one human being by another.

13. Meetings of the African Social Forum shall always constitute open spaces for all those desiring to participate in them, with the exception of organisations known to have made an attempt on peoples' lives as a method of political action.

14. As a space for debate, the African Social Forum is a movement of ideas which stimulates reflection and the maximum transparent circulation of the results of this reflection , on mechanisms and tools of economic domination, means and actions to resist this domination, and on the alternatives that can be proposed to resolve the problems of exclusion and inequality which the current globalisation process has strengthened and aggravated both at continental level and in each African country.

15. As a space for the exchange of experiences, the African Social Forum shall stimulate the knowledge and mutual recognition of participating entities and movements, by specifically enhancing the value of what African societies themselves build in order to streamline economic activity and political action on human needs and the respect of the environment.

16. As a space of articulation, the African Social Forum shall seek to strengthen and create new national and international linkages between entities and civil society movements. The capacity to resist the economic and cultural impoverishment and dehumanisation process, within the continent and the globe, is emerging.

17. The African Social Forum is a process that stimulates entities and movements which contribute in defining their actions in the perspective of the creation of an African and global citizen, introducing, in the continental and global agenda, transforming practices which they experiment in order to build another society, another Africa and another world..

18. The African Social Forum is a process connected to other world processes aimed at building another world on the basis of the principles and values that we are adopting today. It is an integral part of the movement created by the World Social Forum. It shall seek to strengthen the solidarity between the movements and the entities working in Africa and those in other parts of the world.

Addis Abeba, January , 2003.