

COMMUNIQUE OF THE KAAD AFRICAN SCHOLARS
(KAAD – CATHOLIC ACADEMIC EXCHANGE SERVICE)
IN HELMSTEDT, GERMANY
3RD - 6TH JUNE 2010

WE THE KAAD AFRICAN SCHOLARS having gathered from the 3rd- 6th June 2010 at Helmstedt, in the spirit of deliberation on “Civil Society in Africa”, hereby observe the following:

- There are different definitions for civil society. However, peculiar characteristics cut across. Among them are voluntary collective action; autonomy; non-profit; shared interest, purpose and values; and distinction from the state, market and family.
- Civil society encompasses Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Faith-Based Organisations, Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), Clubs and Social Groups, Pressure Groups, Trade Unions (TUs) and Professional Associations (PAs).
- Currently, the focus of civil society in Africa is in the areas of education; health; poverty alleviation; humanitarian activities; good governance, human rights; infrastructure; empowerment and culture.
- So far, civil society in Africa has made some achievements namely, awareness creation; promotion of education; agitation for reforms; improvements of infrastructure and serving as watchdogs.
- In spite of these achievements, there exist a number of challenges, specifically: poor leadership; mismanagement and inadequate resources; political interference; wrong perception of civil society as means of employment and source of income; conflicting and duplication of roles and influence of funding partners. It was further noted that, there is a proliferation of civil society in Africa; however, many of them are voiceless.

In light of the above observations, we make the following recommendations:

- Africans (inclusive of KAAD scholars) should engage in the promotion and formation of Informal Civil Society (ICS) where groups are spontaneously formed based on emerging needs at the local and/or national level.
- We call upon African governments to create just legal frameworks and guarantee the autonomy of civil society.
- We encourage all Africans to embrace the spirit of voluntarism.
- In order to increase self reliance and ownership, civil society should increasingly rely on self-financing (membership fees and philanthropy) other than external sources of funding.
- We urge civil society to increase their efforts in making the African populace more informed about their rights and responsibilities.
- Civil society activities should be structured to fit African values and interests.
- There should be cooperation and partnership among the major actors (civil society, state and market).
- Civil society should go beyond policing the public sector but also take keen interest in the activities of the private sector.

COMPILED BY
Rapporteurs of the participants
from 12 African countries, 22 German Universities,
from PhD and Master courses in a multitude of academic fields

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