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**ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN AWARENESS RAISING AND
ADVOCACY FOR RATIFICATION**

**PRESENTATION TO THE AFRICAN IDP
STAKEHOLDER'S ROUNDTABLE ON AU CONVENTION
ON IDPs**

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ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN DISSEMINATION AND ADVOCACY FOR RATIFICATION

Introduction

The Pre-Summit Forum held here in Kampala, Uganda, from 13-15 October 2009 identified two key priorities for civil society intervention plans in the aftermath of the adoption of the Convention on IDPs and the Kampala Declaration on 23 October 2009 as elements of a vibrant and targeted action plan. The first is the need to raise public awareness about the provisions and implications of the Convention. This priority stresses the need to brief, inform and sensitize civil society about the Convention and the requirement for action in this regard. The second overall priority stresses the need for civil society to organize itself independently and in coordination with other stakeholders to support the ratification efforts. Other priorities were identified such as the need for capacity-building within and among civil society, the requirement of training and partnerships and domestication of the international legal provisions in state law. However, these other requirements were considered mainly as tributaries that were interlinked with the priorities of awareness raising and support for ratification of the convention. Clearly therefore, there was recognition that these two elements are essential foundations for a subsequent action plan and the effective location of civil society responsibility within that action plan.

Moreover, opportunities and challenges were identified in the two main categories in general and specific terms as follows:

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

1. One was that the two priorities are interlinked. Awareness-raising will set the pace for ratification. Similarly, the process of ratification will

also raise the bar of awareness and strengthen commitment on the need to implement the provision of the Convention and Declaration.

2. Two, there is a need to honour the lesson of experience from previous ratification endeavours and processes that are both negative and positive. The negative experience of the African Charter on Democracy and Governance which did not place proper emphasis on the role of civil society and the positive experience of the Great Lakes Protocol on IDPs in which 13 countries ratified a protocol in the short span of one year would be instructive in this regard.

SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS

CATEGORY A: AWARENESS RAISING

- a) Training – Awareness-raising implies special emphasis on training people who can transmit appropriate messages that are adapted to critical target groups.
- b) Media Engagement- Media engagement must be a key component of raising awareness among important sectors of society. Journalist and editors must be sensitized and enlisted as footsoldiers or sympathisers of the course.
- c) Traditional methods- CSOs must also rely on their own exiting tested and tried processes and procedures including traditional methods such as posters, documentaries etc.
- d) Mobilising IDPs as self advocates – There is need to engage and mobilize IDPs themselves as advocates of their own cause so that they can speak for themselves. As part of this process, there is also a need to build IDP

capacities where they are lacking and strengthen and enhance capacities, where they are weak.

- e) Network concept. There is also a need to establish CSO networks or broad coalition of CSOs that can work effectively with other stakeholders and appropriate institutions or mechanisms at community, national, regional and continental levels.
- f) Extension of Training and Capacity building for support awareness raising and training must be extended to governments and other actors. There is a need to engage Ministers and parliamentary committees. Training and sensitization workshops must also be extended to the judiciary and court systems and the military and police particularly in peacekeeping frameworks.
- g) Special emphasis should be placed on enlisting faithbased groups and leaders of traditional society and host communities who are normally the first point of call for assistance and protection of IDPs.
- h) Resources. The concept of raising awareness must be linked to the need to garner appropriate resources. Sustainability is a key consideration here. Unless the effort is matched by the provision of resources, it is bound to be either a one-off event, sporadic or spontaneous.
- i) Capacity support. Resource support cannot be limited to the consideration of fund raising. It touches on the wider issue of capacity support which is closely linked with the need for CSOs to use their grassroots orientation to link effectively with important players and pressure points in national societies.

CATEGORY B: RATIFICATION

The Forum placed particular emphasis on the requirement of support for ratification of the Convention. The Convention will come into effect after ratification by 15 States. There was therefore, a focus on attaining this benchmark and accelerating the pace of ratification in its aftermath. Participants agreed that ratification will set the pace for any implementation process. Hence, it is a compelling and urgent desire as well as a political and practical imperative. There is thus an essential need to locate civil society intervention process in this context.

In doing this, there must be clear recognition that CSOs alone cannot compel or determine the effective pace of ratification, CSOs must work independently and/or in concert with other stakeholders to achieve maximum and precise effect. Ratification is a stakeholder community enterprise within which CSOs must appropriate areas in which they can add value or bring maximum pressure to bear on the basis of comparative advantage.

The specific areas of CSO input were identified as follows:

- a) Awareness-Raising: In promoting certain elements of awareness raising such as training, with critical emphasis on alliance with national and regional focal points, relevant parliamentary communities and Ministers and Ministries to create a general platform for concerted action.
- b) Fostering Partnerships. CSOs can play a pivotal role in fostering partnerships in this context with relevant actors in community, national and regional forums. The experience of South Africa where the National Disaster Management Centre which is a critical agency in this regard has been marginalized and undersourced was cited as a particular example that underlines the need to form partnership with appropriate focal points

- and agencies. CSOs can act to strengthen and enhance their work and enable their importance in national settings as nodal points. They can write letters to Head of States, petition their MPs and political office holders for the same and enlist the sympathy of local populations at appropriate launching pad such as during elections.
- c) Aggressive lobbying and advocacy through the media and intensive lobbying of relevant national actors drawing on the experience of the Great Lakes Protocol.
 - d) By fostering alliances with regional economic communities
 - e) Creating a broad and effective coalition of CSO activists of the cause that will link up with ECOSOCC, PAP, RECs etc.
 - f) Champions- Establishing categories of champions working in concentric circles to promote the cause. There will be gradations in this category. Uganda as a state can be a continental champion with regional leaders such as South Africa, Sierra Leone etc selected by the AU acting as complementary regional counterparts. At the local and national level, actors and actresses, television stars, footballers and sportsmen and women etc can be enlisted as Goodwill Ambassadors to promote the cause.
 - g) The guide on IDPs translated in all AU languages and more can become a handbook for civil society initiative and even governments and regional organisations.
 - h) Strategic opportunities. There is also a need to use appropriate forums nationally, regionally and in international contexts with timelines to support advocacy processes.

In setting the methods and procedures here, there must be clear emphasis on interconnectivity. The Organisation and method used in the campaign for ratification must focus on sequencing where required to promote multiplier effect and adapt CSO behaviour to the appropriate norms of policy influencing processes.