

African Social Forum Council
Dakar, December 3-8, 2006-12-15

Proceedings synthesis

The second meeting of the African Social Forum Council was held on December 3-8, 2006, in Dakar, Senegal. It was attended by over 40 participants from some 20 countries. The meeting aimed at mobilizing all the components of the African Social Movement in order to prepare for the World Social Forum in Nairobi.

The programme of the meeting was articulated around four points:

- 1- Information on the 2007 Nairobi preparation process;
- 2- Thematic mobilization on debt, trade, women and youth;
- 3- Capitalisation on mobilization initiatives carried out throughout the Continent;
- 4- Presentation and discussion on the Nairobi 2007 implementation framework;
- 5- Press conference;
- 6- Meeting with the Senegalese Social Movement;
- 7- ASF Council Facilitation Committee meeting.

The Council was anxious to pay Professor Joseph Ki-Zerbo, who died a few days ago, a tribute and observe a minute of silence. A message from the Council will be forwarded to his family.

The Council also paid deceased members of the National Forums a tribute.

At the end of the meeting, the Council held a press conference which West African medias attended.

A meeting with the Senegalese Social Movement was held on December 8. It was an opportunity for members from the Organisation Committee, the Secretariat and the Council, to answer questions put forward by the Senegalese movement with a view to their participation in Nairobi.

Information on the 2007 Nairobi preparation process

The African Social Forum Secretariat presented two reports: the former dealing with activities carried out by the Secretariat since the March 2006 Nairobi African Council and the financial situation in the African movement, the latter, on the preparation status for 2007 Nairobi.

It emerges from these reports that the level of African participation to the Nairobi preparatory process is satisfactory, despite a difficult financial context. The financial situation presented by the Secretariat show on the one side, that only 55% of provisional resources have been mobilised, or € 499 000, of which only 41% have actually been disbursed.

On the other hand, the Secretariat has recalled the World Forum format, the objectives set by the 2005 Nairobi Council, as well as different ways in which African movement can participate.

Thematic mobilization on debt, trade, women and youth

Four thematic sessions were devoted to mobilization on various aspects:

- African debt : analyses and struggle perspectives for Nairobi and beyond;
- African women : struggles and perspectives for Nairobi and beyond;
- Trade and free-trade agreements: update on struggles and action perspectives for Nairobi and beyond.
- Youth mobilization.

These sessions ended with a presentation of the action plans to be implemented during the Nairobi Social Forum.

Capitalizing on mobilization initiatives carried out throughout the continent

The Council then received reports from different national, sub-regional and thematic Forums held throughout the continent. It also took note of a number of movements of great interest in the mobilization process. The Forums below were thus presented:

The Southern Africa Social Forum, already held
The West Africa Social Forum, already held
The Senegalese Social Forum, already held
The Zambian Social Forum, already held
The Zimbabwean Social Forum, already held
The Niger Social Forum, already held
The Mozambican Social Forum, already held
The Moroccan Social Forum, 3rd edition being prepared
The Maghreb Social Forum, in process
African trade unions meeting, already held
West African Media players, already held
Forum on migrations, already held
Mobilisation for Education, in process
Caravans: West Africa, Southern Africa, in process

On the other hand, the Council was informed about social movements in South Africa, Cameroon, Tunisia, Morocco and Ethiopia, as well as initiatives carried out by the World Forum for Alternatives.

These presentations demonstrated how deeply the African Social Forum dynamic was rooted as well as what level of interest was demonstrated by continental movements for the Nairobi WSF. The also showed an extension of the Other World movement and an increased participation by African populations.

They also allowed an overview of the political, mobilization and material difficulties encountered on the field by these various types of movements

The presentations were followed by a debate on the fact that there is an increasing need for these initiatives to be articulated, and amplified so as to achieve a significant impact in terms of social and political change.

Presentation and discussion on the Nairobi 2007 implementation framework

The WSF East African Organising Committee started with praising the various stakeholders Nairobi 2007 organisation for their capacity to work in solidarity and avoid the internal, and especially external political pitfalls encountered in the Africa WSF process.

It then presented different aspects of the 2007 Nairobi organisation, as well as an updated analysis of available data on schedules activities and participation. The East African Committee thus presented the state of preparation on the following aspects: registration of activities, organisations and participants, the web site, security, accommodation, travel procedures, construction of the WSF site.

It also presented the financial situation, in a state of provisional deficit (**déficit prévisionnel**) and requested more effective commitment from all to allow Africa to meet the challenge of organising a successful 2007 WSF.

It finally presented objectives, expectations and choices in relation to opening and closing sessions, jointly-organized activities and the Common Convergence and Action Day.

A call was launched for all African movements to successfully carry out the jointly-organized activities to be aimed at African concerns and to seize the opportunity offered by the Convergence Day to fully participate in the new common actions to be launched after the Forum.

These presentations were followed by a debate which gave the opportunity to answer questions related to the participation of movements in Nairobi.

African Social Forum Facilitation Committee meeting

Following the ASF Council, the Council facilitation Committee held a meeting which was an opportunity to answer a number of concerns related to organising African participation in the 2007 WSF.

The meeting was attended by the members below:

Edward Oyugi
Taoufik Ben Abdallah
Ouattara Diakalia
Wahu Kaara
Bakary Fofana
Demba Moussa Membele
Thomas Deve
Mohau Pheko (Chair of the meeting)
Rabia Abdelkerim Cheikh

The individuals below attended as observers :

Phillip Thigo
Oduor Owen
Bernard Fonou
José

1 - Jointly-organized activities: On the basis of a proposal presented by the Committee, members took the following decisions:

List of jointly-organised activities

1. Memory of resistances
2. Free Trade Agreements
3. Debt
4. Women
5. HIV/AIDS
6. Peace and Conflicts
7. Living Alternatives (youth)
8. Labour
9. Migration and Diaspora
10. Privatization of common Goods
11. People Sovereignty (inc. food sov, resistance)
12. Housing
13. Global Environment
14. Information and Knowledge

13, 14 will be articulated depending on creativity of other co-organized activities.

- These activities will be held over a three-day period and will deal with African concerns. Each activity will last 2:30 hours. Concept papers are to be submitted to the Organizing Committee by December 14th, 2006.

2. African Convergence Day:

Following discussions on a proposal to organize an African Convergence Day on December 24, aimed at giving the African social movement and its struggles a high profile, it was decided that women organizations would be entrusted with organizing the Convergence Day in order to give it a “female face”. The Convergence will have to address principles and analyses developed by the Council:

- Africa as the cradle and future of mankind will be the grave of Capitalism;
- Free-trade agreements will violate the living conditions of the major part of the population on the continent;
- Dignity and solidarity.

Concerning the December 24 African Convergence Day, Committee members indicated that there still was a methodological deficit on how to move forward self-organized activities towards convergence. It was stressed that the Convergence Day was global, and not specifically African. African movements have to work in coalition to ensure their own visibility and participation in the future action plan.

3. Relations with Asian and Latino-American movements

- Relations with Asian movements:

The discussion started with an overview by Thomas Deve and Wahu Karaa on African participation in the Asian Social Forum and the history of relationship with Asian movements. The various interests and objectives to be met in Nairobi were mentioned.

It was strongly recommended to strengthen this relationship while respecting the autonomy of the parties. It must be in keeping with the context of strengthened South-South relationship and carried out at a political level.

Committee members asked Thomas Deve and Wahu Karaa to pursue with that dimension until Nairobi and keep the Council informed.

- Relations with Latino-American movements:

It was suggested to pursue relationship started during the Porte Alegre Forums, and to seek closer relationship with Afro-Latino-Americans.

- Opening and closing

- Opening and closing will reflect African diversity and involve the different sub-regions.
- The Marathon will be an innovation for the World Social Forum and the welcoming ceremony is key to opening.
- The marathon could be a means of mobilizing if it were to be scheduled on the opening of the Forum.
- The culture commission will examine the matter

- Meeting scheduled in Nairobi

- The Content and Methodology Commission will take place between December 16 and 18 in Nairobi: Thomas Deve, Taoufik Ben Abdallah, Demba Dembelé and Rabia Abdelkérîm will be present.
- After consultation, it was realized that it would be difficult to hold an African Social Forum Council meeting. However, an information meeting will be held before the Forum.
- The International Council will hold its meeting on January 26, 2007, after the Forum.
- Efforts are made to organize a Parliamentary Forum and a Local Collectivities Forum, with the participation of progressive players.

- Other administrative, logistic and financial questions

- The ASF Secretariat will finance the presence of 5 people in Nairobi for a month; these people will be in charge of preparing African participation. It will also support the Kenyan Committee. However, other people will go on their own means. This will be the case for Thomas Deve, Mohau Pheko and Rabia Abdelkerim Cheikh. Among these people, two should have translation skills.
- Concerning financial aspects related to the ASF Secretariat: \$100 000 will be used for the participation of Council members and African organisations, \$50 000 will be allocated to culture. \$20 000 to interpretation.

- The Kenyan Committee will provide premises close to Kassarani to accommodate the Secretariat during the period of the Forum.
- Council members will be accommodated in the same hotel so as to facilitate communication.
- The Secretariat will facilitate the participation of national Forums.
- An African pavilion will be set up as a meeting and exhibition place for African participants.