

## **Rethinking the Civil Society is Pivotal for Africa We Want** **በሲቪል ማህበረሰብ እንደገና ማሰብ ለምንጩ አፍሪካ ወሳኝ ነው።**

Africa needs a robust civil society to ensure that socioeconomic development is inclusive and sustainable and to build a prosperous, economically and politically united society. In addition, as is commonly understood and seen, vigorous non-state actors assist development, democracy, and human rights. Civil society has emerged as a third player, alongside the state and the market. It is no less significant than these two, serving as a critical complement and corrective instrument enabling democratic advancement.

African peacebuilding relies heavily on the contributions of civil society. Among these activities are the defence of fundamental liberties, the oversight of public services, the dissemination of information, the promotion of social harmony among various sectors of society, the provision of intermediaries and facilitators, and the provision of services delivery.

It is regrettable that current events have forgotten and ignored African civil society. Despite all the obstacles, it may have played a crucial role in bringing peace and development to the continent. Consequently, the function of civil society organisations in the majority of African nations is blurred and insignificant. In a functioning democracy, civil society plays an essential role. People with similar interests and ambitions can find a welcoming environment there. And a way to combat the problems with the status quo and boost civilisation as a whole.

Understandably, a portion of civil society can operate as a reactionary force as opposed to being progressive and engaged in societal development. According to the popular viewpoint, civil society has historically and even in the present collaborated with authoritarian or neo-patrimonial regimes. However, this does not signify the demise of civil society; rather, we can have a "wicked civil society" that is a reflection of certain African individuals.

This is reflective of the historical backdrop of Africa: it is not a given that African civil society will seek the developed world instead of attempting to alter its own environment. Unfortunately, the connection between civil society, the public, and governmental authority is complicated by the prevalence of weak states with powerful regimes or vice versa. This has a detrimental effect on the growth of civil society and its ability to function throughout Africa.

In a number of African nations, fear of civil society is prevalent, particularly when its members are both outspoken and assertive. It is partially comprehensible why paranoia exists in undemocratic countries because unless all non-state actors are controlled and exploited in support of the governing party, it may have a negative impact. If the idea of partisan space is not placed in a specific historical and cultural context, it is a flawed assumption.

African civil society should become more "audacious" and instil a spirit of subversion to prevent such notions and to demonstrate that their allegiance lies with the general public and not political organisations. They should propose credible and alternative options for advancing the Pan-African agenda that assist in transforming and regenerating their constituencies and ultimately contributing to Africa's development. Hence, the conversation intended to deconstruct African civil society's fundamental concepts, opportunities and challenges are more pertinent than ever.

### **Incisiveness**

Civil society in the modern world is more multifaceted and widespread than ever before; it has evolved into a self-sustaining web of interdependent people, groups, and institutions. New combinations of players now have access to previously inaccessible regions of power, influence, and association, thanks to the proliferation of information and communication technologies. Because of the shift in infrastructure, the number of online civil society activities has increased dramatically.

By engaging in a wide variety of pursuits, people are able to forge connections across traditional cultural, racial, and national boundaries. These networks enable more significant numbers of individuals to aggregate and jointly address social concerns involving politics, economics, and sociocultural interactions. Consequently, in these simultaneously thrilling and demanding circumstances. Non-negotiable is the requirement that African civil society at local and regional consortia, such as the Africa Union Economic, Social, and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), immediately bring the organisation into compliance.

### **Responsible Leadership**

It cannot be overstated that the norms of civil society organisations require the preservation of fundamental missions, integrity, ethics, purposefulness, and a high level of reputation and trust. As a result of evolution, the importance of relying on trustworthy persons and organisations that are entirely autonomous to perform the job of watchdogs is growing exponentially. For instance, democratic watchdogs, protectors of minority rights, and promoters of ethical ideals for the impoverished and underrepresented.

There is a responsibility on the part of civil society in all of its myriad guises and manifestations to demand higher levels of accountability from all parties involved, including civil society itself. Responsible Leadership involves both an individual and a group element: It requires recognising that actions emerge from our value systems. By listening to these principles and connecting our actions with them, everyone can expand their impact and become ethical leaders in their local environment to achieve our shared goods.

## **Feeble Civil Society**

As the study of epistemology demonstrates, the absence of a robust civil society in development efforts can be catastrophic to a certain extent. This is because safeguards could be neglected, jeopardising the results of the project(s). The construction of large-scale infrastructure projects in Africa is a prime example. As a result, improving that population segment's living conditions is likewise jeopardised.

The inclusive development to which we aspire can only be achieved through concerted efforts to foster an enabling environment and encourage participation from civil society. Innovation, public service, market orientation, and organisational learning are all areas where civil society can play a significant role. It's a catalyst for change because of its capacity to try new things and adapt quickly (far more so than the government).

## **A paradigm shift in thinking**

Government and civil society must establish a common ground to advance the public interest and guide citizens' aspirations in the correct direction through a comprehensive approach to development. The widening divide between the rich and the poor (the haves and the have-nots) due to economic mismanagement and ethnocracy in Africa is a prime example of the rising tide of citizen pressure and grassroots movements within civil society. Such an approach should be nurtured for the public good.

The widening divide between rich and poor also gives rise to public demand for democratic and accountable governance, as well as social justice, among other things. The emergence of democratization's equitable share is a worry for civil society as it analyses the state-society interaction to determine how best to fulfil its duty. As a result, supporting indigenous governance systems with clear mandates and authorities is essential, as these can contribute to economic and social stability. The analysis generated an ongoing discussion about the impact of civil society on the fight against authoritarian governments and the democratic consolidation of Africa's political and economic unity.

## **The capture**

In its most fundamental sense, establishing the AU-ECOSOCC guaranteed a collaborative relationship between the state and non-state actors. The objective of this cooperation was to enable both parties to promote regional development on the continent by working together.

However, the AU and civil society participants on the platform were unable to capitalise on the opportunity and bridge the relational gap in the next chapter. The cause is a mismatch between the institutional framework, including the constitution and programmes, which are not intended to serve the interests of the African people but are more a political gesture for the donor community.

As you may have surmised, the AU-ECOSOC is a copycat of the UN-ECOSOC, and the EU-ECOSOC is similar to the economic integration concept and the like. Despite adopting the original organisations' names, they cannot recreate their authority, accountability, or the most fundamental functions.

As an illustration, the UN's development agencies, such as the UN-ECA, UNDP, and others, mandate that emanates from the UN-ECOSOC. The AU-ECOSOCC, on the other hand, is essentially an advising organ without a defined goal or mandate and has thus never helped improve Africa's economic growth or peace situation. Such an approach rendered the AU-ECOSOCC ineffective and inadequate.

In addition to what has already been mentioned, one of the AU-greatest ECOSOCC obstacles is the presence of self-interested organisations (and leading persons) at the helm. Most crucially, the AU-design ECOSOCC precludes self-criticism and an open evaluation process, which hinders the genuine participation of ethical Civil Society organisations and the associated best practices.

## **Commendations**

Having strong and dynamic civil societies at the local level is crucial, and subsequently those societies can influence national, sub-regional, and continental platforms. I believe that African CSOs should be at the forefront of implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063.

Engaging in vigorous dialogue with Africa's civil society is essential to profit from this significant social structure. In addition, to investigate the most effective means of incorporating the African Diaspora into Africa's historical journey. I am firmly in favour of the reengineering and transition period for the AU-ECOSOCC, which I believe is essential for reacting to and proposing innovative solutions for the African development and peace agenda.

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