

African Development Bank Group 2024 Annual Meetings

Civil Society Side Event – Opening Remarks

Engaging Civil Society in shaping Africa's transformation and the Reform of the Global Financial Architecture

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Protocol observed!

It is with great honor and enthusiasm that I address you today at this pivotal Civil Society Event during the Bank's Annual Meetings. This gathering marks a significant milestone in our shared journey towards a brighter, more inclusive future for Africa.

Today, we stand united on a platform that champions dialogue and collaboration. This event is not just a meeting; it is a testament to our collective commitment to fostering open, people-centered engagement. The Bank is dedicated to listening, learning, and partnering with civil society to drive meaningful change. Our collaboration exemplifies the power of partnership, where every voice matters, and every contribution counts. The establishment and commitment of the Bank-Civil Society Committee and the Bank-Civil Society Coalition on Climate and Energy are eloquent testimony to this!

The Bank's partnership with Civil Society ensures that development initiatives are inclusive, reflecting the diverse needs and aspirations of the people it serves. Collaboration with Civil Society strengthens transparency and accountability, fostering a culture of openness in project implementation and financial management. Civil Society brings local expertise and on-the-ground insights, enriching the Bank's understanding of nuanced challenges and facilitating the design of contextually relevant solutions. Collaborating with Civil Society builds trust and credibility for the Bank, showcasing a commitment to democratic values and participatory development processes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Civil Society and Bank's partners,

Our theme "Engaging Civil Society in shaping Africa's transformation and the Reforms of the Global Financial Architecture" was aligned with that of the Bank's Annual meetings and rooted in the recognition of the pivotal role civil society plays in engaging and influencing policy decisions and ensuring accountability.

Our discussions have been rich and insightful, highlighting key priorities that will shape our path forward.

First and foremost, Africa's transformation is unstoppable. From the bustling markets of Lagos to the innovative tech hubs of Nairobi, Africa is on a trajectory of growth and advancement that cannot be derailed. As we champion economic development, we must ensure that this transformation is inclusive and benefits all, leaving no one behind.

Secondly, the reform of the Global Financial Architecture is not just a desire; it is an imperative. The current system must evolve to better serve our unique needs and aspirations. We must advocate for financial structures that are fair, equitable, and responsive to the challenges and opportunities we face. Together, we can influence these reforms and create a financial environment conducive to sustainable development.

The third priority is the reinforcement of our cooperation through the new Civil Society Action Plan 2024-2028 we all participated in the development. This plan is not just a document; it is a roadmap for action. We must move from commitments to tangible implementation, ensuring that our strategies translate into real-world impact. By working hand in hand, the Bank and civil society can harness our collective strengths to achieve our shared goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our dialogue has also underscored several critical areas of focus. Climate finance, energy transition, the rechanneling of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), and debt sustainability are not just priorities; they are lifelines for our future. Civil society organizations bring invaluable insights and expertise to these areas, ensuring that our approaches are holistic and effective. We must work together to address these challenges head-on, with a sense of urgency and determination.

In a joint statement issued at COP28, where we accepted the Baobab challenge with President ADESINA, the Civil Society Coalition on Climate and Energy expressed its full support to the Bank regarding African priorities on climate finance and SDRs in particular. The Coalition endorsed the African leaders call for channelling of SDRs for climate financing through the African Development Bank. There is indeed an urgent need to step up climate adaptation finance, as well finding innovative ways to deliver adaptation finance at scale and speed – with a focus on anticipatory adaptation measures and effectiveness.

Finally, the role of civil society in driving inclusive, transparent, and accountable reforms cannot be overstated. Our voices are vital in ensuring that reforms consider the perspectives of youth, women, and those living in fragile and vulnerable conditions. Together, we can build resilience and foster an environment where every African has the opportunity to thrive.

A Call to Collaborative Action

In closing, let us remember the words of Nelson Mandela: "It always seems impossible until it is done." Our journey may be challenging, but it is far from impossible! With

unwavering commitment, collaborative spirit, and shared vision, we can achieve the remarkable. Let this event be a catalyst for action, propelling us towards a future where Africa's potential is fully realized, and its people are empowered to lead prosperous, fulfilling lives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On this note, I am proud to confirm that we are working with the Bank to meet our responsibilities for our Civil Society Forum scheduled for next October 2024. This forum will pursue the discussions already underway and the operationalization of the roadmap of priorities set out here. We will work with the entire African civil society ecosystem to establish a community of practice to develop our priorities, raise the hare of reforms, slaughter it together and eat it with appetite. This is Africa's transformation in motion! It's unstoppable!

Thank you, and let us continue this important work with passion and purpose!