

To: H.E Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma
The Chairperson, African Union Commission
P.O. Box P.O. Box 3243,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

5 April 2016

Your Excellency,

Re: Access for Civil society Organisations to the African Union

We present our compliments to Your Excellency, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. The undersigned African civil society organisations (CSOs) appreciate the AU's commitment to transforming the African Union from a union of governments to a union of African peoples. This requires the African Union Commission to work with member states and partners to ensure that the contributions of civil society organisations are mainstreamed through all aspects of the AU programmes and actions.

As you know, Your excellency, the Constitutive Act of the AU emphasises popular participation as one of the basic tenets on which the AU is built. Similarly the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance guarantees effective participation for citizens in democratic and development processes and in governance of public affairs. Civil society participation is recognised as being crucial to the achievement of agenda 2063. The collaboration between the AU and African CSOs is important to achieve an "integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa driven by its own citizens".

Given the commensurable work being done by the AU in resolving conflicts, preserving peace and security, and promoting human rights and rule of law on the continent, it is inimical to have closing spaces for civil society participation, as we remain critical partners to realising the objectives of the Constitutive Act. We are deeply concerned with the narrowing space for engagement at the AU level and the limited access we have as African organisations. The criteria for gaining access to participate in our continental body is restrictive and disabling.

We believe that as African organisations representing African citizenry should be more included within AU spaces and allowed to bring the voices of Africans to the AU by being granted access and being enabled to contribute, free of intimidation and without reprisals, to discussions, that will advance peace, security, democracy, human rights and rule of law in Africa.

To this effect we are claiming our rights as African citizens and calling on the African Union Commission to review without delay their stringent conditions that restrict civil society's participation at the African Union (AU). Furthermore, to adopt a clear and publicly accessible criteria to govern the process by which CSOs may obtain accreditation to attend summits, and provide information on spaces and opportunities for meaningful engagement for all civil society organisations.

représailles, à des discussions qui vont promouvoir la paix, la sécurité, la démocratie, les droits de l'homme et l'état de droit en Afrique.

A cet égard, nous revendiquons nos droits en tant que citoyens africains et exhortons la Commission de l'Union africaine à examiner sans délai les conditions strictes qui limitent la participation de la société civile à l'Union africaine (UA). Par ailleurs, l'adoption de critères bien définis et accessibles au public pour régir le processus par lequel les OSC peuvent obtenir une accréditation afin de pouvoir assister aux sommets, et fournir des informations sur les espaces et les possibilités d'un engagement significatif pour toutes les organisations de la société civile.

Nous restons, en tant que société civile, à votre disposition, pour le développement de ces mécanismes et pour répondre à toutes questions supplémentaires que vous pourriez avoir. Nous saisissons cette occasion, Excellence, pour vous assurer l'expression de notre haute considération.