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*Fatick, February 19, 2016*

**To:**

President ADESINA, AKINWUMI AYODEJI,  
President of the African Development Bank  
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**Via email**

**Enabling more space to civil society organizations at the AfDB annual meetings**

Dear Mr. President,

We write to you as Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) engaged with the Bank, and supporting strong and constructive engagement around the AfDB Annual Meetings and beyond.

As you know, the 2016 Annual Meetings will be held from the 23rd to 27th of May 2016 in Lusaka, Zambia. This event represents a critical forum for representatives of government, business, civil society and media – from Africa and beyond – to debate the social and economic development of the continent.

Since 2009, AfDB has initiated many policy reviews in order to become more transparent and accountable to governments and the public, including CSOs. Through these review processes, CSOs and other non-state actors actively participated in all the consultations organized by the Bank and played a great role in improving the Bank's policies, including the Disclosure and Access to Information Policy, the Energy Sector Policy, the Integrated Safeguards System policy, the CSO Engagement Framework and the Independent Review Mechanism policy.

We appreciate all these efforts of the AfDB to enhance cooperation and collaboration between the Bank and civil society, and it is very illustrative that the CSO Engagement Framework agreement came out during the CSO Forum held in Tunisia in March 2010. Indeed, we believe that the CSO Engagement Framework is an important policy that can help strengthen and sustain the Bank's engagement with CSOs in line with the AfDB's vision, and the Bank's Long Term Strategy (LTS) 2013-2022 whose *guiding principle considers civil society as a key partner for significant progress on the continent*.

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We wish, however, to express our concern over shortcomings on the design and implementation of the CSO Forum since AfDB's establishment of the CSO engagement policy.

The CSO Forum provides legitimacy to the Bank and should ideally provide a unique opportunity for civil society engagement with Bank staff, management, governors and member State officials, as well as media, gathered for the Annual Meetings.

However, the way in which it has been organized (and imposed on CSOs) the last five years, with insufficient consultation or consideration, has reduced the Forum's independence and compromised its purpose of enabling meaningful CSO engagement with the Bank.

Civil society's freedom to determine the issues addressed through Forum events has been undermined. Bank staff organizing the Forum vet and routinely alter CSO event proposals, diminishing the space for constructive engagement and potentially stifling criticism. This practice has been justified by space constraints; however at the same time, Bank-sponsored events at the Forum are proliferating. These events often appear aimed at public relations rather than at promoting open discussion.

Moreover, and partly due to inadequate consultation, we as CSOs see the CSO Forum as the Bank's Forum and not the CSO Forum.

Civil Society Organizations wish to use the Forum constructively as a mechanism to publicly engage with the Bank, as a platform to highlight concerns and as a mirror to flag limitations in existing accountability mechanisms.

To be an effective mechanism for civil society engagement, the CSO Forum must reflect the principles of **autonomy, visibility, and participation**.

So to achieve those principles, we recommend:

1. CSO autonomy over the proposal of sessions and the content of events to be held at the Forum, and a return to the first-come, first-served event booking system with clear deadlines set well in advance to maximize participation;
2. Allocation of more physical space for CSOs within the Annual Meeting building;

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3. A regular, and fully open consultation mechanism for CSD Forum participants to engage with the Bank over the Forum's organization;
  4. Development of jointly-agreed guidelines for inclusion of events in the Forum, via the regular and ongoing consultation mechanism; and
  5. Integration of CSD Forum and official Bank seminars' schedules on the Bank's Annual Meetings' website.

We make this request in good faith, and thank you in advance for your support.

Please direct any response to this letter to [alsagne@aim.com](mailto:alsagne@aim.com)

Sincerely,

Mr. Aly Sagne, President of Lumiere Synergie pour le Developpement

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Endorsed by the following organizations:

### **BENIN**

1. Nature Tropicale ONG;

### **CAMEROON**

2. Green Development Advocates (GDA);
3. Global Network for Good Governance(GNGG);
4. Réseau Camerounais des Organisations des Droits de l'Homme (RECODH);

### **DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

5. Conseil Régional des Organisations Non gouvernementales de Développement (CRONGD);
6. Observatoire d'études et d'appui à la responsabilité sociale et environnementale (DEARSE);
7. Justice Pour Tous;
8. Centre d'Appui à la Gestion Durable des Forêts Tropicales (CAGDFT);

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9. Justicia;
  10. Action Paysanne Contre la Faim (APCF);
  11. Civil Society Watch for Minerals of Peace;
  12. Foyer de Développement pour l'Autopromotion des Pygmées et Indigènes Défavorisés (FDAPID);
  13. Centre de Recherche sur l'Environnement, la Démocratie et les Droits de l'Homme (CREDDHO);

#### **GABON**

14. HADASSA;
15. Croissance Saine;

#### **THE GAMBIA**

16. Worldview;

#### **ETHIOPIA**

17. Human Rights Council;

#### **GUINEA**

18. Centre du Commerce International pour le Développement (CECIDE);
19. Association Guinéenne pour la Transparence (AGT);

#### **GHANA**

20. The Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC);

#### **IVORY COAST**

21. Forum National sur la Dette et la Pauvreté (FNDP);

#### **KENYA**

22. Jamaa Resource Initiative;

#### **MALI**

23. Fondation pour le Développement du Sahel (FDS);

#### **MALAWI**

24. Citizen For Justice;

#### **MAURITANIA**

25. Mer bleue;
26. Forum Mauritanien du Climat et du Développement Durable;

#### **NIGERIA**

27. Foundation For Environmental Rights, Advocacy & Development(FENRAD);
28. Environmental Rights Action / Friends of the Earth Nigeria;
29. FOUNDATION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE EARTH (FOCONE);
30. Peace Point Action (PPA);

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## **SENEGAL**

31. Lumiere Synergie pour le Developpement ;
32. Fahamu ;
33. ARCADE;
34. Réseau des Plates-Formes d'ONG d'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre (REPAOC);
35. Union pour la Solidarité et l'Entraide (USE);

## **SOUTH AFRICA**

36. Natural Justice;
37. Leadership Initiative for Transformation and Empowerment (LITE-Africa);
38. Centre for Applied Legal Studies;
39. Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria;

## **TANZANIA**

40. Mazingira Network (MANET);

## **TOGO**

41. Programme d'Appui à la Femme et à l'Enfance Déshéritée (PAFED);
42. Groupe d'Action et de Réflexion sur l'Environnement et le Développement (GARED);
43. Dimension Humaine;

## **UGANDA**

44. Buliisa Initiative for Rural Development Organisation (BIRUDD);
45. Uganda Land Alliance;

## **ZIMBABWE**

46. Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA);
47. African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODDAD);
48. Chiadzwa Community Development Trust;

## **THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (USA)**

49. Accountability Counsel;
50. Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL);
51. International Accountability Project (IAP);
52. Oxfam International;

## **THE NETHERLANDS**

53. Both ENDS;
54. Centre for Research on Multinational Enterprises (SOMD);