

**STATEMENT OF CSO REPRESENTATIVES AT THE OPENING OF
THE ANNUAL NATIONAL POLICY DIALOGUE
BLUE PEARL HOTEL, DAR ES SALAAM**

2/12/2010

PRESENTED BY MOSES KULABA, CHAIRPERSON POLICY FOUUM, ON BEHALF OF CSOS

Your Excellency the guest of honour, Hon. Mustapha Mkulo, Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs

Distinguished guests at the high table

Your Excellency representatives of diplomatic missions

Representatives from government, private sector and civil society organizations,

Members of the press,

Ladies and gentlemen, a very good morning to you all

On behalf of my fellow members from Civil Society Organizations, many of whom have greatly contributed to the content of this speech, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the government of Tanzania for extending this invitation to participate at this annual policy dialogue. The presence of non state actors in this meeting indicates the recognition of the vital contribution CSOs have to the development agenda of Tanzania. Our greater expectation during the five days of this dialogue is to see our views and recommendations taken onboard by government as it implements policy.

This annual policy dialogue is happening at a time when a new cabinet has come in place, a new parliament and successor plans for MKUKUTA and MKUZA. It is, therefore, an opportune time for us and every stakeholder to renew our commitments and to drive the development agenda with new vigor and zeal. We congratulate all those who have been appointed to new posts. We look forward to working with you to fulfill our pledge and commitment in pushing the development agenda forward and ensuring citizen participation and ownership of the development agenda. We will also continue to make sure the voices of the marginalized and the public is heard and strive for accountability to the public in all development processes and governance.

Mr Guest Honour, I have been requested by my colleagues, to highlight four issues in this statement: These are:

- ***Poverty Eradication and National Statistics***
- ***CSO, Government and DP Dialogue Structure and Domestic Accountability***
- ***Budget Transparency and Oversight***
- ***Constitutional Dispensation and Governance***

Your Excellency the guest of honour

As we deliberate this week, let's think of the 33% of Tanzanians who are still poor¹ with little control over what tomorrow will bring. Let's spare a thought for the children, women and men who die for lack of access to good health facilities and preventable causes. But let's also think of the abundance in potential that Tanzania has and the hope for a better Tanzania. Our main concern is that the poverty eradication, local government and public Finance Management reforms have been moving three steps forward and two steps backward. As a consequence, the quality of social services and social service delivery is slow, perpetually stagnant and worrisome. Our appeal is that in the next five years, let us talk action.

Mr Guest of Honour, in reflecting on these figures and focusing on the future, we cannot avoid looking at the quality of our National Statistics, how they are collected and their validity. Our concern as CSOs is that Tanzania has very good statistics that relate to performance but which are challenged by the ordinary citizens. They find it difficult to make sense of this impressive data. In the next five years, our appeal is that when government releases national statistics, they should reflect the reality on the ground.

As we are about to engage in discussions around policy issues, we would like to highlight a few key issues which we find crucial.

Firstly, this has to do with the importance of having a **meaningful relationship between the government, DPs and CSOs**. For some time now, CSOs have been late comers in many government processes often due to late invitations and very little information on the agenda ahead, thus affecting our participation on one hand, and limiting the meaningful contributions that CSOs can bring on the table, on the other. We, therefore, urge for broader and timelier engagement of CSOs. CSO participation should not only be considered as a good practice for

¹ Poverty and Human Development Report, 2009

inclusive decision-making, but rather as a critical source of alternative thinking. In other words, they should be taken as real partners in development.

Secondly, **CSOs find the current MKUKUTA/PER/GBS dialogue structures too heavy and require a lot of human and time resources, just to keep up to speed with the agenda, as a result of many meetings organized under the structure.** This limits the ability and consistency of CSO participation in the dialogue. We call upon the government to come up with a **simpler and less tasking structure** that will enable more CSOs to participate consistently and give meaningful contribution. As you will know, most CSOs work with the marginalized and are stretched of these invaluable resources and therefore it is a lot to ask of them. We are organizing ourselves as a sector to achieve a lighter dialogue structure which will make organizing CSOs to engage less costly and time consuming. In other words, we would like to influence the formation of an improved dialogue structure that is **relevant, helpful and productive.**

Thirdly, as far as the implementation of MKUKUTA, MKUZA and other policy documents are concerned, we emphasize the **importance of domestic accountability, budget transparency and tip-top** oversight mechanisms. The parliament and the office of CAG continue to be toothless hunting coyotes as they implement their oversight functions. They both have limited authority and mandate in redressing budget discipline and accountability. The parliament has limited powers to reject budgets presented by government (even if they are unacceptable) as this in a worst case scenario may lead to dissolution of the parliament and a call for fresh elections. Our recommendation, made two years ago of having an **Established Parliamentary Budget Office** and a **Citizen budget** published by government are still relevant today. We want this to be at the center of discussion and implementation in the next five years

The level of budget transparency is still a problem with citizens only receiving limited budget information. The Open Budget Index for 2010 results shows that only 48% of budget information is publicly accessible. Citizens' access to this information is still a problem. The results show Tanzania has slipped behind its two key East African neighbours Kenya and Uganda.

We also want the **Development Partners** to be more transparent on the amount of aid committed and disbursed to government. Although there is an Aid Platform which is being created, there are still some limitations on access to this information and therefore making it difficult for citizens to monitor and understand how their government relates with the Development Partners on aid and the challenges involved.

On the other hand, the office of CAG is limited in terms of following up on budgets submitted through certificate of emergency and/or supplementary budget and to enforce implementation

of the audit recommendations. We find the question of effective management of development financing as a key priority if we are to ensure achievement of the successor strategies that we are about to discuss in this forum. Our recommendation of reviewing the accountability channels of the CAG from the head of **the Executive branch of Government** to the **legislature** are still very relevant and we would wish the next five years to see this process is concluded.

Your Excellency guest of honor

On another note, the demand for a **new constitution raised by non-state actors** just before and after the re-introduction of multiparty system in 1992 is now a burning issue as far as the future of our country is concerned. It is known that the current constitution is one of the hindrances in achieving good governance and accountability. On one hand, it accommodates articles which contradict the role of separation of power among the three organs of the government meanwhile affecting accountability by allowing conflict of interests between the players. On the other hand, it gives absolute power to those at the epitome of authority thus, affecting the autonomy and role of important institutions like the PCCB in dealing with corruptions and fraud, and National Electoral Commission in conducting fair and free elections.

The contribution and consideration of every stakeholder on this issue is crucial to the future of this country and to ensure any achievements gained from implementing the MKUKUTA and MKUZA are sustainable. Zanzibar has shown the way, it is time for Tanzania as a whole to do the same. We cannot leave this discussion to be used simply to meet the interests of political parties in their tug-of-war. It is a matter of national interest and requires full citizen engagement. We call upon for the government to take a lead in kick-starting a national dialogue for reviewing and improving our constitution. The CSOs are ready to engage in the process and provide any support which will be required.

Your Excellency guest of honor

We thank you once again on behalf of the Government of Tanzania for your invitation to this forum. Once again, we pledge our 100+ commitment to work with you in a meaningful way. Our experience in the MKUKUTA review process indicates that it is possible for CSOs to work with the government. We thank our donors (UNDP, EU, SDC, Foundation for Civil Society, Embassy of Finland, CIDA and others), who facilitated the CSO consultation process. We hope you and all participants in this forum shall take these few words under consideration and we look forward to productive and constructive deliberations in this forum.

Thank you all for your attention.