

African Consensus Declaration:

Preamble: The African Inspiration

We need a fresh economic and financial framework. Across Africa creative approaches are arising at the grass roots to protect and assure both cultural and environmental sustainability. Today a diverse group of regional leaders, within both government and NGOs, people's and social action movements, together with individual activists and social entrepreneurs, are pioneering far reaching solutions to sustainable economics. These efforts collectively are forging the basis of sound economic paradigms that can protect ethnicity, while fostering the healthy evolution of culture. These organic programs make Africa shine as an inspiring symbol of local responses to global predicament. Collectively these diversified approaches have become the African Consensus.

Article I: Three Principles of the African Consensus

The African Consensus is not established on any one model or economic theory. Rather it is drawn from collective experiences across the continent where local knowledge has proved successful in creating pragmatic solutions to development challenges.

The African Consensus presents a fresh economic development paradigm built upon three core principles:

- 1) *Preserving ethnic diversity and indigenous identity, culture, traditions and heritage;***
- 2) *Through building self-sustainable economic platforms and business models based on local realities to alleviate poverty through self-empowering skill transfer;***
- 3) *That in turn are socially responsible and seek to improve basic human needs such as education, and medical care, while prioritizing environmental protection.***

In developing countries (and even in highly developed countries) ethnic and socially marginalized groups require the tools of empowerment to achieve their sustainable and equitable development. As an economic paradigm, African Consensus calls for pragmatic economic, financial and educational approaches to give them these tools.

Article II – African Consensus Fundamental Development Rights

The African Consensus seeks to protect three fundamental development rights:

1) The Right to Ethnic Diversity and Local Identity

Ethnic diversity is the richness of humanity. The preservation of each ethnic group's culture, heritage and identity, is an inalienable human right. We must without equivocation uphold this right.

Each ethnic group has the right to its own individual and local identity and the self-determination of that identity. They know how best to evolve their own culture, heritage and ethnicity. Such identification with a collective group is as important as its economic growth. Both are needed equally. The quality of life cannot always be measured by the quantification of material ends alone. It follows therefore that levels of industrial output and consumption are insufficient in themselves as the measure of a people's happiness. When a people's identity is assaulted they may in a state of duress turn toward extremism.

2) The Right to Cultural Sustainable Development

All culture and heritage requires an economic base upon which to flourish. Without an economic base ethnic identity can easily be lost. Ethnic diversity can be preserved and protected through rational

economic platforms, based on local and indigenous needs. Likewise, cultural sustainability cannot be achieved without sustainable economic growth. To achieve rational economic platforms improvements in education, medical and vocational skills are prerequisite. Self-sustainability can be facilitated with micro-financing and vocational skills to permit local people to establish their own enterprises in a manner consistent with their traditional economic, political and social structures.

3) *The Right to Give Our Children Water*

Climate change threatens water supplies to all life forms. Increasing desertification has made this problem particularly acute across Africa. Historically, many civilizations fell, not due to stock price fluctuations, but lack of water. Water security will effect industry and financial markets, in turn social stability, and even wars. If we cannot save our environment, our planet will be destroyed, and our children will be left with nothing. We can give our children money to spend. But can we give our children water to drink? Our children have the right to drink water.

Article III - African Consensus as a Framework for Promoting Non-Violence

Social violence and terrorism are not the result of fundamental religious beliefs as characterized in western mainstream media. People turn to extreme measures when they have no outlet to vent their frustration over conditions of poverty, ethnic marginalization, or both. Experience shows that when the marginalized have no outlets, continually frustrated, their potential for turning to extremism in various forms increases. Ethnic violence often arises from competition to control scarce resources. The problems associated with the alienation of ethnic groups must be addressed at its root cause, through economic empowerment, education, healthcare, and returning to people what is theirs, recognition of their own individual diversity, identity and self-respect. Otherwise dissent and strife will not go away, regardless of how sophisticated the military technology and social re-engineering theories of constituent states.

Article IV - Establishing an African Consensus Institute

Founded on the principles of African Consensus, the African Consensus Institute is to be established as a non-government organization. The Institute will promote the African Consensus core principles and fundamental rights through regional cooperation between stakeholders, and engage in second track diplomacy efforts addressing ethnic, development and environmental issues.

Article V - African Consensus as a New Economic Paradigm

We have ignored Africa's rich traditional systems of wisdom which prioritize environmental balance and quality of life, which is a repository of knowledge on how to preserve our environment and give society order. But we have largely ignored traditional knowledge in favor of imported economic models, which are often unconnected to realities on the African continent. African Consensus pursues local initiatives for economic development that suit the realities of Africa. It articulates as an economic paradigm the successes of civil society and the informal sector in addressing economic and social predicament. It calls upon these successes to be recognized not as an alternative economic approach, but as a mainstream economic model.

Consistent with the principles concerning the right of development, social and economic rights and the rights of peoples set forth in the African Charter on People's and Human Rights, we submit this resolution to the African Commission. We hereby request that the African Commission adopt this resolution submitted by the NGO Forum as a resolution of its own and a blueprint for economic development for the continent.

Adopted by the NGO Forum, Banjul, Gambia, April 27