

Nyuklianet: Africans for a World Free of WMDs



Network of African Civil Society Organisations Working on Weapons of Mass Destruction and Development in Africa

Background

1. On 29 June 2009, the Institute for Security Studies' (ISS) "Africa's Development and the Threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction" Project (hereafter referred to as the WMD Project), with the financial support of the Royal Norwegian Government and the United Kingdom's High Commission to South Africa, convened a workshop in Pretoria, South Africa, to discuss Africa's role in curtailing the threat of weapons of mass destruction.
2. The aims of the workshop:
 - Raise awareness amongst a select group of African civil society organisations on the importance of engaging their governments on the various treaties and conventions covering weapons of mass destruction (including nuclear, biological and chemical weapons) in Africa.
 - Build African capacity to engage positively and effectively in international disarmament and non-proliferation forums.
 - Stimulate discussion and dialogue about how Africa can positively balance its developmental needs with disarmament obligations and non-proliferation concerns.
 - Discuss the feasibility of establishing a network of African civil society organisations focussing on Africa's socio-economic development in the context of the global threat of weapons of mass destruction.

3. Civil society participants were from South Africa (ISS), Egypt (the Cairo University/Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs), Malawi (Centre for Human Rights and Reconciliation), Zambia (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War [IPPNW]), Nigeria (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War [IPPNW]), Namibia (National Society for Human Rights), and Kenya (University of Nairobi).
4. Throughout the day's proceedings, the topic of whether a network of civil society organisations in Africa should be established was considered under the different topics and sessions.
5. It was agreed that:
 - a. There was a clear need for information sharing amongst African NGOs in order to both gain a better understanding of the issues and to be able to make the connections between the Conventions that aim to increase Africa's security and the benefits to Africa's socio-economic development that will accrue from their full universalisation and implementation in Africa.
 - b. Civil society has either the expertise or at least easy access to expert analysis on issues of national and global importance – developed through their own experiences on the ground (for example on the environmental and human rights impacts of nuclear material) or through their links to academia.
 - c. NGOs come from different angles (environmental, health, sustainable development, human rights etc) and if networked can more effectively influence government.
 - d. There is a need for a united civic voice from within Africa that can articulate the voice of Africa in international fora without being perceived as being driven by the "North" and which can influence African States in meeting their commitments and obligations.
 - e. The time is ripe and long overdue for the creation of such a non-elitist African CSO Network (note *not* a CSO Network in Africa).

Establishment of the Network

The ISS, in collaboration with the Egyptian Council on Foreign Affairs, has established the African CSO Network with a focus on WMD issues and in particular nuclear issues.

- Aims of the Network:
 - i. To share information and knowledge;

- ii. To facilitate rapid mobilisation when necessary;
 - iii. Collaborate on joint research and policy initiatives;
 - iv. Host joint events;
 - v. Monitor international WMD developments and trends;
 - vi. Monitor continental WMD developments and trends;
 - vii. Alert members of important international events;
 - viii. Articulate African positions in international NGO fora.
- Composition:
 - i. NGOs present at the workshop form the core of the emerging network;
 - ii. The following national constituencies will be targeted to become part of the network:
 1. Students
 2. Academia
 3. Developmental NGOs
 4. Human Security Institutes
 5. Etc.
- Rallying points:
 - i. The question of toxic waste dumping on the continent;
 - ii. The question of NPT Article 4 rights and the renewed global interest in the development of nuclear power for both electricity generation and for use in medicine, agriculture etc – that is, the use of nuclear material for peaceful purposes;
 - iii. Awareness raising and education amongst the general public on the importance of these issues for Africa from both a security and developmental perspective;
 - iv. Universalisation and implementation of the Pelindaba Treaty;
 - v. Actions to ensure that the five Nuclear Weapon States sign and ratify all relevant Protocols to the Pelindaba Treaty to prevent, inter alia, the stationing of nuclear weapons on the African continent and its associated islands;
 - vi. African support for the Global Zero movement, including endorsement by prominent Africans from all sectors of society;
 - vii. African support for negotiating a nuclear weapons convention.
- The Network will consider:
 - i. The need for the network members to engage relevant National Authorities, parliamentarians, diplomats and civil servants;
 - ii. The need for a professional and objective “WMD threat assessment” in Africa to be undertaken;
 - iii. The need to develop indicators of success and progress of the network;
 - iv. The development of a “Toolkit” that network members could use when engaging with specific actors and sectors;

- v. The need for there to be a relatively strong presence by African civil society at the 2010 Review Conference.
 - vi. Exploring and promoting the importance of the linkages between sound disarmament policies and practices and sustainable development on the African continent;
 - vii. Highlighting the socio-economic benefits to Africa of implementing international WMD instruments across the continent;
 - viii. Promoting the development, strengthening and implementation of national non-proliferation control measures in Africa;
 - ix. The promotion and ratification of the African nuclear-weapon-free zone agreement (Treaty of Pelindaba); and,
 - x. The development of African policy recommendations, which will enhance prospects for a positive and forward-looking outcome of the current Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review cycle.
- Communications:
 - i. The Network will communicate using an email list created by the ISS;
 - ii. The Network will make use of the ISS-hosted blog at <http://wmdafricafiles.blogspot.com>

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