

Resolution on Ethiopia (24 March 2007)

We, the participants of the African Civil Society Forum 2007, convened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 22nd - 24th March 2007,

Recognising that the realisation and sustenance of the Millennium Development Goals presupposes respect for human rights and rule of law, creation of an enabling political environment that is built on solid democratic principles, and the commitment, mobilization and full participation of all sectors of society including civil society, political parties, and state actors,

Considering that the government of Ethiopia has ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other international human rights instruments, and that Sub-Article 9(4) of the Ethiopian constitution categorically declares that “All international agreements ratified by Ethiopia are an integral part of the law of the land”

Recalling the public pledges and guarantees made by the Government of Ethiopia to ensure that the national election of May 2005 would be free and fair,

Considering the long-time aspiration and belief of the Ethiopian people, the contesting political parties, the civil society and Ethiopia’s friends and partners that a free and fair election and respect of the choice of the people will lay a firm foundation for lasting peace, political stability and national development,

Regretting that the enormous enthusiasm and deep hope aroused by the prospect of a free, fair and peaceful national election were brutally crushed by the subsequent spilling of innocent blood, the wanton destruction of property, the mass arrest of thousands of people, and the incarceration of opposition party leaders, elected parliamentarians, councillors, journalists, lawyers, teachers, and civic activists,

Believing that political differences should be resolved through dialogue, that civil society should be free to contribute to social harmony and the welfare of the poor and the marginalised, and that Government has the responsibility to uphold the law,

Recognizing the duties of all civil societies in all countries to strive for the eradication of poverty, to defend human rights, to promote justice, and to advance peace and harmony,

Have resolved as follows:

We urge the Government of Ethiopia to immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners, including fellow civil society activists and other human rights defenders;

We strongly recommend that the Government of Ethiopia pave the way for dialogue between all political stakeholders to bring about national reconciliation and create a wider space for all non-state actors to contribute to social harmony, stability and national development;

We call upon the UN bodies, CONGO and Ethiopia’s development partners to actively work towards the realisation of a genuine dialogue between the Government of Ethiopia, civil society, other national political forces.