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THE CIVIL SOCIETY CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME

SUMMARY REPORT OF A MEETING BETWEEN KEY LEADERS IN  
PARLIAMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY LEADERS

AT HOTEL TRIANGLE ANNEX, JINJA.  
FROM 28<sup>TH</sup> TO 30<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2007

## Executive summary

The Civil Society Steering Committee (CSSC) of the Civil Society Capacity Building Programme (CSCBP) in conjunction with the Planning and Development Co-ordination Office of Parliament convened a three-day meeting between key leaders in Parliament and civil society to discuss the nature of the relationship between the legislature and civil society in the new dispensation of multiparty governance. The three day meeting which took place at Hotel Triangle Annex in Jinja, from 28<sup>th</sup> June – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2007, was attended by 46 participants who comprised of Chairpersons of Sessional and Standing Committees of Parliament, Chief Whips in Parliament, Chairpersons of Parliamentary Forums, and key leaders of various civil society organisations.

The meeting convened under the theme “**Building Bridges, exploring possibilities: The Parliament/CSOs partnership in Uganda**” sought to achieve the following objectives:

- a) To critically analyse the roles and relationship between Parliament and Civil Society in order to glean lessons learnt
- b) To propose new and better ways of relating between Parliament and Civil Society
- c) To redefine the relationship modality given the new multiparty political dispensation
- d) To provide a networking space for leaders in Parliament and Civil Society.

The three day meeting covered a number of presentations and discussions by eminent personalities from Parliament and Civil Society Organisations. They included Mr. Livingstone Sewanyana, the executive Director of Foundation for Human Rights Initiative, Hon. Rose Namayanja, the Chairperson of the Defence and Internal Affairs Committee of Parliament, Prof. Ogenga Latigo, the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, Mr. Godbar Tumushabe, the Executive Director of the Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment, Mr. Emmanuel Pinto, the Director, Planning and Development Co-ordination Office of Parliament, Hon. Perez Ahabwe, the Chairperson of the Sessional Committee on Trade and Industry, and Ms. Rose Mwebaza, the Co-ordinator, Uganda Land Alliance.

The discussion centred on effective and practical ways of enhancing the relationship between Parliamentarians and Civil Society Organisations with a view to understand better the key roles and contribution that Parliament and Civil Society play, focussing on areas of mutual benefit, as well as redefining the relationship modality that would enable both Parliament and Civil Society to play their roles.

After thorough discussions, the meeting came up with a joint communiqué which spelt out the way forward.

## *COMMUNIQUE*

*We, Members of Civil Society representing various civil society interests, and Members of Parliament from Sessional and Standing Committees of Parliament as well as Parliamentary Forums;*

*Recognising the complimentary roles between parliament and civil society in achieving democracy, good governance and development;*

*Seeking to build bridges and explore possibilities between Parliament and Civil Society;*

*Desirous of strengthening a formal and functional partnership;*

*Do declare as follows:*

THAT a Civil Society/Parliamentary Forum be formed to co-ordinate relations and issues between Civil Society and Parliament. Whereas it has been generally agreed that the Liaison Office for such function shall be within the Office of the Director for Parliamentary Planning and Development Co-ordination, the duty of working out the detailed modalities of how the Forum should function, its structures and the channels of communication has been assigned to a committee co-chaired by Rev. Canon Grace Kaiso and Hon. Manuel Pinto, to be assisted by one representative from Parliament, and one representative from Civil society. The committee shall report to a similar meeting as constituted today within one month, its proposed framework for discussion and endorsement.

Among other tasks, the Committee is supposed to:

- Work out a detailed structure of the Forum and the different channels of communication within the parliamentary system.
- Determine the relationship between the proposed Forum and the Parliamentary Forum or any other existing systems or Forums within Parliament.
- Ensure that interest groups within Parliament such as Political Parties are integrated within the channels of communication.
- Determine the method of management of contentious issues between Parliament and Civil Society.
- Report to a similar meeting as constituted today within a period of one month.

THAT whereas it has been agreed that there is need to subject Members of Parliament and Civil Society Organisations to performance scrutiny, and

whereas the Civil Society Organisations have the NGO Quality Assurance Certification Mechanism (QuAM), there has been no consensus on the method of scrutinising Members of Parliament's performance on account of the failure to agree on performance indicators. It has however been agreed that the issue of performance indices be explored further beyond attendance registers and Hansard reports to include parliamentary activities outside Parliament.

THAT the issue of collaboration between Civil Society Organisations and Parliament at a national and constituency level be handled by the proposed Civil Society/Parliamentary Forum once constituted and operational.

THAT there is need to exchange research information between Parliament and Civil Society. To this end, research reports by CSOs should be shared with MPs and deposited in the Parliamentary Library or/and circulated to Members of Parliament.

THAT Parliament shall involve Civil Society in the current budget process at the stage of considering the Finance Bill and at the stage of discussing Ministerial Policy statements.

THAT Civil Society avails copies of the *Minimum Agenda* to Members of Parliament to enable them monitor governance issues.

This communiqué is issued this 30<sup>th</sup> day of June 2007, at Hotel Triangle, Jinja.

#### Annex 2: List of participants

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