

**DECLARATION BY CIVIL SOCIETY PROMOTING THE RATIFICATION OF THE
AFRICAN CHARTER ON DEMOCRACY, ELECTIONS AND GOVERNANCE,
issued at the end of a civil society forum held in
Pretoria on the 22nd and 23rd of February 2010**

We, representatives of civil society organizations in Africa, meeting in Pretoria, South Africa on the 22nd and 23rd of February 2010, to discuss and design strategies for mobilising broad based support among civil society organizations, state institutions, African political parties, regional economic communities and others, for the popularization, ratification and implementation of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (hereinafter refer to as 'The Charter'), adopted by the 8th Ordinary Session of the African Union (AU) Assembly, held in Addis Ababa on January 30, 2007.

Conscious of the greater benefits that democratic and constitutional systems of government bring to society, particularly, peace, protection of human rights, and development.

Desiring that the peoples of Africa are not denied these optimum benefits.

Noting with deep concern the recent resurgence of different forms of unconstitutional change of government.

Being convinced that:

- I. The spirit of the Charter is to promote and strengthen democratic principles and processes within member states;
- II. The Charter is a significant step towards the realization of democratic governance, human security and development for all citizens of the continent.

Noting further that the Charter:

- I. Calls upon African governments and other state institutions to effectively practice the principles of credible elections, constitutional rule and democracy;
- II. Creates an opportunity for the promotion of responsive and participatory African citizenship through Freedom of Expression and Right to Information;
- III. Promotes gender equality and inclusion of marginalized groups such as youth, ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities;
- IV. Enhances mechanisms for dialogue among African states and non-state actors for prevention management and peaceful resolution of conflicts;

- V. Upholds the supremacy of constitutional order and therefore condemns unconstitutional change of government, manipulation of the constitution, bad governance, all forms of impunity and corruption since these threaten peace, security stability and development on the continent.

Being dismayed at the slow progress at which member states are ratifying the Charter.

Bearing in mind that only four countries, namely Mauritania, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone and Burkina-Faso, have ratified since its adoption in January 2007.

Determined that concerted efforts should be put in place to ensure the accelerated ratification of the Charter for the benefits of the peoples of Africa.

We hereby resolve that,

We will commit ourselves to:

- VI. Promoting, educating and advocating the ratification and implementation of the Charter through raising awareness at all levels - community, national, sub-regional, and continental;
- VII. Pursuing effective collaboration among civil society and state institutions to ensure that the Charter comes into force by the end of December 2010, with the aim of achieving full ratification and implementation by 2015;
- VIII. Actively engaging parliament, political parties, relevant state institutions, the media and others to expedite the ratification process;
- IX. Closely monitoring and making public progress in the popularization, ratification and implementation of the Charter across the continent, and
- X. Calling upon all promoters of democracy, human rights and good governance in Africa to actively support the realization of this collective commitment.

Finally, believing that the Charter constitutes a framework for our collective future, to live in peace, with dignity, justice, accountability and democratic governance in order to assure equitable and sustainable development.

We hereby call on all Africans to join in this effort to realize the ideals and objectives of the Charter by urging their governments to ratify and to put it into application.

23rd February 2010

Signed by:

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