

ZAMBIAN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS' POSITION

Trade, among others, through good implementation of trade-policies and supported projects, can be made an effective means to address poverty challenges in Zambia and other countries. In this regard, civil society organisations (CSOs) in Zambia have strived to work very closely with the government and the private sector in order to realise dividends of trade by ensuring that trade opportunities are utilised. The US' African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), being one of them, set to advance US sub-Saharan trade in order to address poverty and development challenges in these countries.

More specifically, CSOs, since the initial days of the AGOA, have continued to act as 'watchdogs' which has resulted into the recorded modest growth in trade volume by most of AGOA beneficiary countries. The trade volume from 2001-2010 increased by 156 percent with extractive products (mainly petroleum) dominating. It is further an incontestable observation that trade volume for 2010-2011 have increased from US\$60.1bn to US\$70.8bn with petroleum products dominating. This positive marginal boost in trade volumes make CSOs in Zambia conceited and hereby pledge their continued commitment to fostering increased US-Africa trade under AGOA.

Albeit this development, there is little diversification ensuing from AGOA beneficiary countries beyond extractive products. According to recent research information, extractive products have direct impact on poverty reduction as these sectors mainly correlate with macro-economic policy issues.

Therefore, the need to address productive and supply side capacity of eligible sectors/products which can have a direct impact on poverty becomes essential. The agriculture, handcraft sectors etc. are dominated by the poor; these sectors have a huge bearing in the shaping up of trade in any country. First, trade starts on a small scale, and most big organisations have been operating on a small scale before grabbing expansion opportunities. It is, thus, important that voice of small-scale farmers (given that agriculture is the backbone of trade) and small and medium scale enterprises be captured in the AGOA process for them to advance their livelihoods.

During the last AGOA conference held in Lusaka, Zambia, a pledge of up to US\$30mn per year for four years towards boosting trade capacity in Africa as well as a pledge of US\$2mn towards supporting the activities of the African Women Entrepreneurship Programme (AWEP) was made by the US government.¹ It is, however, unclear as to what extent these pledges have been implemented. Sub-Saharan governments were also challenged to ensure that right policy frameworks supporting the trade agenda are domesticated whilst also ensuring that leadership towards addressing administrative and infrastructural policy challenges that affected trade are addressed. Sub-Saharan African countries responded in the affirmative.

Therefore, AGOA being an important trade opportunity providing non-reciprocal duty-free quota-free (DFQR) market access opportunity for a specified good and services to sub-Saharan countries, it is important that the 2012 conference should not be another "business as usual" conference. It must live up to the challenge of its theme "*Enhancing Africa's Infrastructure for Trade*" and commitments.

¹ The US also gave a commitment towards the extension of the Third Country Fabric Provision from 2013-2015 and extension of the AGOA from 2015-2025 respectively

It is against this background that we, the CSOs, in Zambia met to reflect on some of commitments made during the Tenth AGOA Forum and present our collective analyses and proposals. We invite the broader CSOs to seriously consider these during the 11th AGOA Conference and beyond in order to build a genuinely equitable and sustainable future.

Accordingly, we call for:

Zambian Government

- There is a need for inclusiveness of trade governance processes for sustainable development. Inclusivity through effective participation of non-state actors will promote the process of democratisation and improve accountability of the government to citizens. This will also contribute to the 'legitimisation' and public acceptance of outcomes of trade policy. Therefore, we do recognise the efforts being made by the government to promote Public Private Dialogue through sector advisory groups. Though these are formal structures, there is non-existent of a legal backing which will ensure that progressive inputs from non-state actors would be taken on board by the state;
- The Government of Zambia should ensure that trade is thoroughly mainstreamed in all current and future development plans. This should start by utilising the forthcoming mid-term review of the Sixth National Development Plan (SNDP) and ensuring that new trade sector priorities that will be identified in the Diagnostic Trade Integrated Study (DTIS) are mainstreamed;
- We call upon the Government of Zambia to expedite the creation of a conducive business environment, i.e. to continue streamlining licensing procedures through the business license reforms, create a combination of measures designed to reduce bureaucratic burdens of doing business, and boost public support in the country to facilitate and promote small and medium enterprise (SME) growth;
- We call upon the Government of Zambia to expedite the creation of a gender sensitive business environment to address the unequal power relations between men and women;
- We call upon the government to harmonise and standardise customs' requirements to allow easier movement of goods and services;
- We still reiterate the need for the government to include three CSOs and bear all the cost in future AGOA. CSOs can bring forth positive contributions in such forums because they work closely with marginalised groups and know exactly what is needed to be put in place for the underprivileged to benefit;

US Government

- We call for the successful and timely extension of the Third Country Fabric Provision by the current American Congress before August 2012. This will remove the uncertainty that has resulted in a recent 25 percent decline in the African apparel exports to the US;

- We urge the US government to relax its restrictive rules of origin in order to promote diversification of exports into the US and also support regional integration through regional value chains. There is need to move towards action on this particular exigency;
- Supporting the call by AGOA CSO working group, we strongly urge that a renewed AGOA should provide for diplomatic support and development assistance to facilitate the completion of a continental Free Trade Agreement encompassing sub-Saharan Africa by 2017; Tripartite FTA in Eastern and Southern Africa by 2014 and an Economic Community of West African States' Customs Union in West Africa with linkages to Central Africa as soon as possible;

Regional Bodies

- Strengthen efforts to ensure that regional integration is human development-focussed and equitable by conducting research, advocacy and raise awareness on the positive impacts of regional economic integration on consumers and individual economies as well as the possible effects of non-integration.

Lastly, Zambian CSOs are urging parties involved to ensure that commitments which are made in the said forums should be implemented before the next forum thereby avoiding deliberating on the same issues in subsequent forums.

The list of Zambian CSOs and other organisations that attended the workshop and endorsed the document are mentioned below.

AGOA Zambia Civil Society Conclave

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Participants

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