

13th ANNUAL STRATEGY MEETING OF THE AFRICAN INITIATIVE ON MINING, ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY (AIMES)

JUNE 21-24TH, 2011, HARARE, ZIMBABWE

1.0 Introduction

We, 32 members of the African Initiative on Mining, Environment and Society (AIMES) from Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Zambia, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Zimbabwe and our partner from the United Kingdom and such networks including the Africa Trade Network, the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD), Tax Justice Network, ZCTU and the International Alliance on Natural Resources in Africa (IANRA) held our thirteenth Annual Strategy Meeting from June 21-24, 2011 in Harare, Zimbabwe.

2.0 Context and Purpose

The 13th annual strategy meeting was well timed because of on-going mineral policy reform initiatives, the climate change negotiations leading to Congress of Parties (COP) 17 in December 2011 and the preparations towards Rio+20 (United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development). The meeting took place when there are growing threats to the Africa's mining reform agenda and the essential outcomes of the climate change negotiations and the Rio+20 meeting.

Therefore, the 13th annual strategy meeting was structured as a platform to:

1. Build the capacity of African civil society organisations to enhance their advocacy on the reform agenda
2. Provide opportunity for networking and sharing of experiences
3. Develop and adopt specific policy positions and campaigning strategies to optimise the benefits of mining and the outcomes of the climate change negotiation to the peoples and economies of Africa
4. Evaluate and reposition AIMES as an effective African vehicle for advocacy on mining, climate change and the Rio+20.

3.0 Issues

The meeting discussed:

- The continental and regional reform agendas including the impetus of the reforms, economic competition, the prospects of the reform, the Africa Mining Vision and the Report of the International Study Group as alternatives to the current mining regimes in Africa, as well as the mining policy reform processes at SADC and ECOWAS.

- The growing threat to the reform agenda including the EU Raw materials initiative, the Natural Resource Charter, the Africa Mineral Governance Programme and Bilateral Investment Treaties.
- Domestic resource mobilisation and the challenges of financing the reform agenda in particular and Africa's development in general
- The arenas and sites for advocacy, examining in particular the AU and its institutions including the Regional Economic Blocs, the linkages between mining, climate change and the green economy proposed under the Rio+20 conference
- Strategies and the role of AIMES as an effective African vehicle for advocacy on mining, climate change and the Rio+20.

4.0 Observations

Based on shared analysis and understanding of the issues discussed, the meeting made the following observations:

Impetus

Mineral resources have the potential for social and economic development of African countries. However, the main beneficiaries of the vast mineral resources of the continent have been private corporations and economies other than Africa, while the cost is externalised to local communities and the environment. Part of the reasons for which structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) were prescribed for the continent stemmed from the failure of primary commodity dependent African economies to use their vast mineral resources for economic development and transformation. SAPs themselves turned out to be instruments of de-development of mineral commodity dependent economies

Competition

Implementation of the liberalised mining regimes since the introduction of SAPs has resulted in a race to the bottom on the continent as well as a renewed scramble for the continent by old and emerging economic powers. The race to the bottom and the scramble for Africa's resources, work together to exacerbate the under-development of the continent.

Reform Initiatives

The on-going reform initiatives at the continental and regional levels are in response to the failure of the current mining regimes on the continent. The fundamental focus of the reform initiatives is to put trade and investment in mineral resources under better regulation in order to optimise public benefit in Africa, including community benefits, value-addition, ecological and human rights protection.

Threats to the reform initiatives

We observe that the on-going reform initiatives are under threat, particularly from a number of emerging policy initiatives such as the EU Raw Materials Initiative, The Natural Resource Charter, the Africa Mineral Governance Programme by the World Bank, as well as Multilateral and Bilateral Investment Treaties. While the continental and regional reform initiatives aim to improve regulation, the raw material initiative emphasises unregulated and unrestricted access to raw materials. The Natural Resources Charter on the other hand reinforces the existing unequal relationship between African governments, communities and multinational corporations. The underlying tenets of these parallel emerging initiatives is the preservation of the unacceptable status-quo with regards to the exploitation of the minerals of Africa

Domestic Resource Mobilisation and Financing the reform agenda

Extractive resources have the potential for domestic resource mobilisation in Africa. This potential has not been realised due to the overly aid-dependent economies run by African governments. The cost of running the aid-dependent economies tends to result in excessive expropriation of the mineral resources of the continent.

Climate change

We recognise that climate change is a major global problem, with Africa most exposed to the consequences of climate change and climate variability. These problems arise principally from the policies, practices and production and consumption systems of the industrial north. Extractive sector activity which is one of the major economic activities on the continent not only contributes to diminishing the carbon sink but also constantly reduce the capacity of rural populations to climate change adaptation and mitigation. We are concerned however that the ongoing climate negotiations do not adequately take into account the developmental priorities of Africa as there are serious attempts to roll-back principles and conventions which recognised the common but differentiated responsibilities.

Rio +20

Ten years after the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), twenty years after the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), and forty years after the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, the United Nations is convening a conference in June 2012 on the title United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD). The conference is seeking to provide a platform for the international community to rethink economic development and find ways to halt the destruction of irreplaceable natural resources and pollution of the planet. The main issues of the conference are the promotion of a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication as well as an institutional framework for sustainable development.

Africa Union and Regional Economic Communities (AU & RECs)

We recognize the Africa Union and Regional Economic Communities as sites and arenas for advocacy. The transformation of the OAU to AU makes it a more people centered institution and a continental body for uniting African governments in their relation with the world. REC being the building block of the AU bringing pertinent issues from the regional perspectives.

5.0 Demands/Recommendations

We call for a speedy completion and implementation of the harmonisation of existing policies and formulation and adoption of norms which enhance cooperation.

We call on African governments to improve understanding and quality of the reform agenda and secure maximum support for it while remaining united in their commitment to forge ahead with the reform as an alternative paradigm to mining on the continent. African governments should also ensure coherence and alignment of aspirations and strategies between the regional and continental level processes.

We call on African leaders and Africans at home and in the diaspora to resist any pressure on African governments to abandon course on the reform agenda as happened with the Lagos Plan of Action in the 1980s. We also demand full respect and promotion of the right of African governments and citizens to policy and development autonomy

We recognise the relationship between domestic resource mobilisation, economic development and democracy, in particular accountability of public institutions. On the basis of this recognition, we demand a shift of emphasis from aid-dependence to domestic resource mobilisation by such actions as enhancing the fiscal policies as well as exploring alternative sources of financing development.

We demand an equitable solution to climate change which must arrest global warming and facilitate Africa's development. We demand that the industrial north should live up to its historical and legal obligation in the upcoming COP 17 in Durban

We demand that the concept of the green economy should not be used to intensify free market, commodification and privatization of public goods such as water land, air and forests. Experience has shown that the privatization of these public goods has adverse consequences for the quality of life of the majority of the African population.

We call on the AU and the Regional Economic Communities to improve access by citizens through reforming their internal structures and rules of access

6.0 Conclusion

We concluded the meeting with an understanding and commitment to work together in collaboration and solidarity with communities affected by mining, African civil society organisations, partners from the global north and south to:

- Influence the reform agenda by raising awareness, resisting threats and promoting norms which promote community rights, the environment, human rights and fiscal regimes
- Intervene and influence the outcomes of the Climate negotiations and Rio+20
- Build pressure for the adoption of our collective positions that advance the development of Africa.

We call on the media to echo our demands and calls.

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