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Action for a strong and prosperous Africa

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PRESS RELEASE

CIVIL SOCIETY CHALLENGES COMMISSION TO 'MEET AFRICA'S EXPECTATIONS'

LONDON. UK civil society groups will today present the Commission for Africa with five 'big ideas' to help it bring real and lasting benefit to African citizens.

The ideas will be presented by the non-governmental organisation (NGO) network BOND – which represents nearly 300 UK-based NGOs working in Africa and throughout the developing world, at a joint workshop it is hosting with the Commission for Africa.

Graham Bennett, a member of BOND's executive committee, and director of One World Action, is co-chairing today's meeting, which will bring together officials from the Commission and 50 BOND member agencies, to discuss ideas and suggestions to help deliver development and prosperity for Africa in the 21st Century.

He welcomed the Commission's consultation with civil society, but warned that it should not go over old ground:

"BOND members have partners and experience in Africa that offer a wealth of ideas and perspectives to this initiative. The Commission for Africa has a tough job to come up with an action plan that is realistic, progressive and matches the expectation of African citizens."

“Yet another list of ‘top-down’ and technocratic proposals will fail: civil society can play a central role in making the Commission’s proposals legitimate and effective. This consultation is a good first step”.

Myles Wickstead, head of the Commission’s London-based secretariat, who is co-chairing today’s workshop, said:

“We are very conscious that if the Commission for Africa is to succeed, we need to consult as broad a range of people as possible to ensure that we build on the best ideas and that we can translate these into concrete actions.

NGOs and civil society are a key element of that consultation process and we very much look forward to productive and constructive discussions with them.”

Notes to Editors

1. The first stage of the Commission for Africa’s consultation process in the UK was launched in collaboration with the UK civil society members on 11 June. BOND then submitted a joint response to the Commission, available online at www.bond.org.uk or www.commissionforafrica.org It has also encouraged individual member organisations to submit their own contributions.
2. The Commission for Africa will publish a note on the outcome of the consultation in September.
3. The Commission for Africa is an initiative of the UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, to provide a coherent set of policies to speed progress towards a strong and prosperous Africa. It will report in spring 2005, including recommendations to the G8, EU and other wealthy countries, as well as African countries.
4. There are 17 Commissioners who have been appointed, of which nine are African. Commissioners are working around the themes of: governance; natural resources; human development; peace and security; culture and participation; and economy.
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