



## Africa Action: Consultation Retreat-June 8/9, 2015



### Executive Summary

#### Introduction

On June 8-9 2015, the Africa Action Transitional Board (AATB) hosted a retreat with a group of individuals who work on Africa issues and initiatives as part of a *Consultation* to help guide the board's decisions about the future of Africa Action. The Consultation also included an online survey, a student focus group and one on one interviews. The primary topics discussed were:

1. What is the state of advocacy on a progressive agenda as regards Africa from the United States.
2. Whether there is a need for an organization focused on African issues or global issues that have a particular impact on the continent, and if so, what kinds of projects or programs such an organization should pursue.
3. Discuss what had happened with Africa Action; the lessons learned and implemented; and whether Africa Action could and should be revived in a sustainable manner.
4. If appropriate, develop the outline of a plan to re-launch the organization.

#### Key Findings

- Currently, US-Africa relations lack a strong, progressive voice-on Africa policy, making it difficult to affect necessary change here in the United States in support of efforts on the continent.
- It is no longer feasible (if it ever was) to have a single, issue that will resonate with the entire continent, but there are themes that could unite communities in the United State in solidarity with communities in Africa.
- There is a clear need for a-progressive organization that is solely focused on African issues or on global issues that impact Africa.
- There was agreement that the progressive community working on issues in Africa, either regional or thematic, was facing increased complexities globally, here in the US and on the continent; and that effective organizing, campaigning and advocacy have been losing ground; and that there were no longer easily identifiable validators of necessary moral stature.
- The lack of resources to connect with others active in the global Africa advocacy community and expand and support their work, require such an organization to be strategic and focused in what it works on and supports.

- Africa Action can add value by becoming a key connector, facilitator, and most importantly, a link between African groups in the United States and on the continent.
- The African Diaspora is extremely engaged and passionate on issues that affect their communities here in the US. They also engage in initiatives on a national basis from time to time. This energy must be tapped and supported. Prior outreach to some diaspora groups has garnered high levels of interest but has not been sustained. Africa Action could fulfill the current need for a progressive organization that serves as a bridge between organizations in the US and Africa, and help drive US and global policies toward supporting progressive change in Africa.
- Africa Action must look to what it means to become a “progressive” organization, as there is no single unifying issue that affects all communities in Africa in the same way. Therefore, Africa Action must focus on a limited number of problem areas. Some ideas of possible engagement include climate change, militarization, poverty, illicit financial flows, and gender issues.
- AA’s online survey and interviews showed that one role/function that progressive Africa activists hope Africa Action serves is to build coalitions with other groups working on African issues (both in and out of US), engage with young people, develop a strong online/social media presence (technology is a tool not an answer), and seek new voices in order to educate and engage the public more broadly. This sentiment was shared by retreat participants.
- Survey participants and attendees at the retreat felt Africa Action had to become an organization that can link groups together to advocate and work on issues in Africa. They also felt that the organization must establish a visible online presence.
- Retreat participants felt that the leadership of a future Africa Action should be dynamic and passionate with at least 5 work years’ experience; familiar with social justice issues in the US and Africa; have experience working in the social justice sector; able to connect with a cross-generational and multi-racial constituency; and talented in expressing and supporting strong ideas through op-eds and social media campaigns.
- The group recommended that based on available funds, there will be funding for two positions for a year to plan and undertake work on two programmatic areas.
- The proposed timeline is to hire an executive director by November 2015 in preparation for the Africa Action re-launch in January 2016.
- The position announcement will be listed on September 15 and closed on September 30, 2015. The location is flexible, however a DC presence is preferred. Once a director is hired he or she will have the discretion of hiring a second staff member.

- The Transitional Board, with help from an advisory group , will develop draft policy papers on the three possible programmatic focus areas:

**Militarization** and undermining of governance, accountability and civilian oversight of institutions in Africa with the support of external actors like the United States. POC: Adotei and Melaura

**Stopping Illicit Financial Outflows** from the continent. POC: Sarah and Imani

\*Supporting efforts for **Climate Justice** for African countries and for poor and marginalized persons within African countries. POC: Adotei.

- The Transitional Board will begin efforts to develop a new board to be in place early in 2016 to ensure that the organization has the best possible governance and financial support during the one year period, and ideally, beyond.
- AATB will reach out to diaspora organizations to learn more about their work, and how, if appropriate and desired, Africa Action’s work could support their programmatic goals while also helping inform the development of the Africa Action work plan for 2016.
- AATB will share the findings of the Consultation with peer organizations and activists.

For additional information, please email [Africa Action](#).

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