

We are determined to foster an Africa-wide solidarity and unity of purpose of the Peoples of Africa to build the future we want – a right to peace, social inclusion and shared prosperity.

Extract from the Kilimanjaro Declaration, written and adopted at the

## Africans Rising Conference

23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> August 2016  
MS – TCDC, Arusha, Tanzania



#AfricansRising

I am joining this movement because I believe that Africa can and should be its best version.

I am joining this movement because I want my children to seek their better future right here on the continent.

I want my grandchildren to sing and rejoice in the fact that the Grass is Greener right here on the continent and nowhere else.

**HILMA MOTE**

The Africans Rising Conference held in Arusha, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> August was a critical manifestation of the movement to join forces across the African continent and in the Diaspora, to call for and plot a path towards the Africa we want.

The energy and enthusiasm of the 272 delegates, from 40 countries carried with them was a wonderful inspiration and affirmation of Africa and her people. Participants carried the hopes and aspirations of the people of their countries in readiness to share their experiences and knowledge, learn from others and, add their voices towards the co-creation of a truly African movement. Unanimous in supporting each other on the issues that bind us together as the peoples of Africa rather than those that separate us by the artificial boundaries segmenting our continent into 54 entities.

Africans, civil society organisations, peoples movements and others are ready to rise and take responsibility, to work with and for one another as agreed to in the unanimously adopted Kilimanjaro Declaration.

In the course of being the volunteer Launch Director of Africans Rising, I have seen and heard many powerful manifestations of why this movement is timely and necessary – few more inspiring and personal than my trade union colleague and Interim Working Group member, Hilma Mote’s words in her blog post just before the conference:

*I am joining this movement because I believe that Africa can and should be its best version.*

*I am joining this movement because I want my children to seek “their better future” right here on the continent.*

*I want my grandchildren to sing and rejoice in the fact that the ‘Grass is Greener’ right here on the continent and nowhere else.*

Hilma’s words remind us of the organising principles of past movements like the anti Apartheid struggle and, the energy of present movements for climate justice that put people at the centre of the process to build a better society – a more just, peaceful society where people can access and enjoy their inherent human dignity – we must build a system that serves the 99%. Anything less would be a failure of not just civil society – but with unchecked negative climate impacts – a failure of our very ability to exist and survive as human beings.

Kumi Naidoo

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Launch Executive Director  
Africans Rising

## Introduction

We have witnessed a drastic curtailment of the freedom of association, assembly and expression in far too many countries across the continent. The shrinking political and civic space, heightened levels of corruption and growing levels of inequality are the markers of post liberation democracy on the African continent – and some would argue, across the world too.

Civil society in Africa is under assault on many fronts, as are African people. We are experiencing many restrictions on political space, the erosion of women's rights, rampant corruption that aids illicit financial outflows, natural resource devastation, and increasing threats to peace and security. Regular livelihoods are often reduced to marginal existence – not a peaceful, prosperous and healthy Africa – we have become focussed on mere survival – when we should be working on the aspiration to thrive and fulfil our human potential.

These rights violations have been met by new forms of social organisation and leadership leading to partial victories and new forms of popular actions and movements. Traditional NGOs have been significant by their absence from these victories – and the African Union, is no longer (if it ever was) setting the pace for a peaceful, democratic continent that places active citizenship at the centre of its growth. While the African Union has adopted several progressive policies on gender equality, human rights, democracy and just and democratic governance, there is a yawning chasm between policy and implementation at country level.

The process that started out as the Africa Civil Society Centre (October 2015), widened into the Africa Civil Society Initiative (May 2016) and since 24<sup>th</sup> August 2016 is known as Africans Rising is the result of a bottom-up series of on and offline consultations and dialogues between and amongst *social movements, NGOs, peoples and popular social justice movements, intellectuals, artists, sports people, cultural activists and others, across the AU determined regions of the continent including the African Diaspora.*

In this context, the Validation Conference was a unanimous success, meeting and exceeding the consensus agreement from the Rustlers Valley Strategy Workshop, in May 2016:

*Consensus is emerging as a result of online and offline consultations that several steps needed to be taken to establish the need for a united African civil society; that such an idea, having gained sufficient consensus amongst Africans would then be tested and validated collectively and publicly at a Validation Conference before the end of 2016. The conference will deliberate on how such an Africa wide platform for justice and peace should be established and operate. Should there be the requisite level of support for the idea, such a Validation Conference, would mandate that the operations of a platform should commence promptly during 2016.*

After much work by a small launch team and a handful of volunteers, the Africans Rising conference took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> August 2016 at the MS Training Centre for Development Cooperation (TCDC), in Arusha, Tanzania.

272 people attended the conference from 40 countries on the African continent, (and representatives from the Diaspora), with 51% of delegates being women and 60% being under the age of 35.

The conference prepared and unanimously adopted the Kilimanjaro Declaration - the founding charter of Africans Rising, confirming the earlier consensus that African unity reflected by greater social, political and economic integration is critical for Africa and its peoples and united civil society will be the vanguard of this movement for justice, peace and dignity.

## Purpose and Process

The major purpose of the conference was to present the key consensus points in the process to date,

- Update delegates on the work undertaken since the idea of a broad civil society coalition was first mooted in October 2015;

- Share the major consensus points to date on the thematic areas;

- The organising narrative and;

- Proposals for how Africans Rising could be constituted; operated and governed

The conference was designed to have more smaller group discussions and fewer traditional plenary sessions. Delegates were randomly allocated between a total of five groups (of >50 each) and, met over two days in three sessions to discuss the major consensus points in the process to date.

The conference included two large group, consensus-building sessions, along with opening and closing plenary sessions. The facilitation team was drawn from participants, the Interim Working Group (IWG) and volunteers and included bloggers, rapporteurs and mediators.

In the course of the two-day conference, delegates spent extended and sometimes heated periods in discussions around the major consensus themes of Africans Rising. The membership and governance discussions were no less diverse or engaging.

In these discussions, points were raised and contested and the moderators were tasked with finding the common ground within the diversity of ideas. In this process, participants were guided towards finding and building common consensus amongst themselves.

The dialogues and their inherent diversity of approaches and misunderstandings were to be expected and, represent breadth and depth of the co-creators of the Africans Rising conference; from young activists to seasoned veterans of liberation struggles; and trade unionists to visual storytellers.

In the sections below, we list the major consensus points reached in the conference and, detail the diversity of the points raised in relation to them.

## **Framing the Context**

Discussion circles to deepen analysis and programming vision in five themes; expanding civic space, gender inequality, inequalities, corruption/impunity and climate justice

There were suggestions to widen the consensus thematic focal points of Africans Rising and/or make them more reflective of the following:

Peace and security (and end to violent conflicts on the continent),  
Young people should be specifically included in all areas of work, leadership and governance  
Education and employment (decent work) are key needs for shared prosperity,  
Electoral justice and, an end to rigged elections

Africans in the Diaspora rated several mentions and there was consensus that Diaspora Africans face their own, but related challenges and Africans Rising must work to ensure solidarity and unity of all Africans in the world.

## **Validating membership and governance proposals, revenue and financial mechanisms**

Five discussion circles to deepen mechanisms around levels of membership fees, Diaspora fundraising, African-based resources and the ambition of being self-sustaining as an entity.

The discussions on membership, fundraising and building a self-sustaining movement elicited lively debated and dialogue and the key considerations can be summarised as follows:

A code of conduct, based on ethical considerations for members and leaders was considered essential to long-term success

Membership models included stipulations on inclusiveness, a progressive social justice approach, an avowedly non-violent movement with Pan African values and principles, solidarity and the desire to ensure innovation in all stages of the movements development.

## **Synthesis of emerging consensus on vision, programming and management and, Presentation of consolidated proposition on the Africa civil society initiative**

Participants cautioned against simple solidarity actions and suggested accompaniment as better reflecting their values and ideals – Africans Rising needs to be present along the way through the processes initiated on the ground.

Advocacy was highlighted and the initiative should rethink traditional approaches to advocacy, using various means beyond social media. Radio was highlighted as a key communications tool alongside social media and word-of-mouth.

Mapping of resources across the continent from smaller movements to larger networks was essential if Africans Rising is to succeed in leveraging this mass support to address the systemic causes of poverty and inequality.

Alliance building was highlighted as a means to build the movement from below and beyond borders, establishing a solidarity framework from grassroots to the continental levels. These alliances should push back against repressive laws through the institutions and the mass movement itself.

There was unanimous support for the proposal to use African Liberation Day (Africa Day) on 25 May each year as the apex organising moment.

Knowledge creation and curation focused on embracing all kinds of positive innovations that could help build and sustain the movement and the people it serves.

Mechanisms for harnessing and sharing knowledge, together with bringing more academics and intellectuals into the dialogues was seen as a key focus for the movement. Strategic Convening brought to the fore the need for and value-add of face-to-face and smaller group meetings as a way to build campaigns from the ground up.

Data gathering and sharing within ethical open frameworks were considered essential to building, consolidating and sharing knowledge.

The group dialogues highlighted the need for promoting African knowledge, both in understanding and addressing local challenges.

Leadership development focussed on ensuring good governance was deemed essential – with a focus on mentorship programs for upcoming leaders, to help guide them into the right direction. The power of inter-generational learning and sharing was flagged as a key tool for building a cadre of new ethical leaders across African society. Volunteerism was also highlighted as a tool to grow the knowledge and skills base of the movement.

The role of religious movements and traditional leaders was flagged as being both essential and potentially divisive in cases of rights realisations for sexual minorities

## Key Outcomes

The closing session included some contestation around the text of the Kilimanjaro Declaration – although the delegates were able to reach consensus and unanimously adopted the document on the basis of a decentralised, citizen-owned future that will build support and solidarity for local struggles, empower local leadership and immerse activists in the grassroots work of building social movements from below and beyond borders.

Consensus on the thematic focus of Africans Rising,

Expanding space for civic and political action

Fighting for women's rights and freedoms across society

Focussing our struggles on the right to equity and dignity

Demanding good governance as we fight corruption and impunity

Demanding climate and environmental justice

Consensus on the need to proceed with vigour to launch the movement formally on 25 May 2017 with a series of local actions and events in all 54 countries of the continent to;

Send a clear message that the people of Africa, will no longer accept anything less than the freedoms and rights to ensure the complete fulfilment of their human potential and dignity as articulated in the Kilimanjaro Declaration

<http://africacsi.org/2016/08/24/the-kilimanjaro-declaration>

## Co-creating the future - #25May2017 Mass Mobilisation

Participants agreed:

That they would each carry the message of Africans Rising to their local communities and constituencies, across the continent and, into the Diaspora;

Share the Kilimanjaro Declaration as the key rallying point with as many people as possible,

Recruit people to this movement for justice, peace, jobs and dignity and,

Committed to prepare for the #25May2017 day of mass mobilisation.

## Acknowledgements

The conference was made possible by the support of the Wallace Global Fund, Comic Relief, The Mo Ibrahim Foundation, Open Society and, anonymous donors.

The whisper and session translators

IWG members, volunteers, rapporteurs and social media team

Media briefing attendees

Irungu Houghton for the programme development and facilitation as his in-kind contribution

The participants from 40 countries for the 397 USD contribution to the conference costs  
In total, individual giving for the Africans Rising conference amounted to over 30k USD in own contributions from volunteers, participants and, staff

The staff, management and contractors of MS-TCDC

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The work of Africans Rising is made possible through the shared and distributed operational support of CIVICUS – World Alliance for Citizen Participation, ActionAid and the Training Centre for Development Cooperation (MS-TCDC).

Africans Rising is the result of ideas proposed in October 2015, although it is probably more accurate to say that the unanimous adoption of the Kilimanjaro Declaration on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2016 marks the official founding date of Africans Rising.

[www.africans-rising.org](http://www.africans-rising.org)