



## The Symposium 2005

### Summary Report

The Africa Unite Symposium was organised as part of the celebrations to honour the 60th anniversary of the Honour Rebel, Bob Nesta Marley, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 2-4 February 2005. Several organisations – The African Union, The Bob Marley and Rita Marley Foundations, UNICEF, Economic Commission for Africa and World Bank – came together to organise a symposium, which would give an opportunity to African intellectuals from the continent and from the Diaspora, using Bob Marley's songs, to examine the African condition, to debate issues, and point out problems which impede the realisation of African Unity; keep the African Woman under multidimensional forms of exploitation and oppression and which marginalise African youth, cultural workers (artists, musicians, painters and dramatists) from participating fully in building a viable, free, economically self reliant and culturally proud continent.

Some 115 females and 130 males registered for the three days of consultation, using the breakout groups of Intellectuals/Activists, Artists/Activists, and Youth/Activists to examine the songs and topics in detail. Youth who attended came from Burundi, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Jamaica, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa and Tanzania forming part of the nearly 300 participants, and representing the Bob and Rita Marley Foundations, UNICEF, AU, Students from Addis Ababa, UNDP, the media, UNAIDS, ILO, ECA, the city government and the Embassies. The Symposium was deemed a success in terms of level of participation, the opportunities for networking and interaction as well as relevance of topics discussed.

The Symposium was highly interactive giving participants many opportunities to network and meet each other; especially for the youth, who all lived in the same compound and held many sessions/ activities after the daily sessions. There were two special aspects of the Symposium that should be mentioned. One aspect was the inclusion of the Bob Marley songs as the themes around which each session revolved. The second is in respect of the breakout group for the Artists/Activists. This group was determined to generate unique and original output, a desire that was accomplished. Although we do not have the arts and songs etc. that came from that group in this report, they will all be available in the upcoming book, which is being published by the partners and reflects an all aspects of the Symposium.

The three-day Symposium generated three reports from the breakout groups that come together in the following:

### ***Plan of Action***

Bearing in mind that the symposium did not have a permanent structure and cannot therefore be directed to do all the things that the symposium considered necessary and urgent, participants in the Symposium decided that they would, in their personal capacities and using their institutions and positions of leadership in those institutions to act in order to realize the following:

### **The place of the woman in African society**

1. To give pride of place, respect and dignity to the African woman,
2. To empower her economically through removal of legal impediments to inheritance and property rights,
3. To put appropriate pressure on relevant government legal departments to ensure that laws are written in African languages that people can understand and thereby expand their legal rights,
4. To restore the woman's place in the family as the bearer of culture and traditions,
5. To show by personal example, behavioural change that is necessary in order to stem the tide of the HIV/AIDS scourge recognizing that lack of educational and economic opportunities for young women is responsible for the vulnerable position that has resulted in there being 4 times more women infected with HIV/AIDS victims than men and to show compassion and care for those affected by HIV/AIDS,
6. To urge all our governments and societies to respect the rights of African children to protect them from physical and moral abuse; to provide adequate resources for their education and health. We pledge ourselves to support all efforts of the AU to resolve African conflicts peacefully so that children and women who are the first victims of the civil wars and civil strife are spared the brutalities of violence, rape and death that are in evidence in Africa's conflict areas,
7. To request the Bob and Rita Marley Foundations to facilitate in the short run, linkages between participants in the symposium as well as between them and African women's networks already in existence.

## Continental and Diasporic Relationships

The critical areas of concern included:

8. Unity and a unity of African's living in the Diaspora through building of bridges, through trust and promotion of repatriation of African's in the Diaspora wishing to return to the continent. As the AU is charged with this issue we urge them to do everything possible to make this a reality in the nearest future,
9. The need for education that demystifies Africa's history and restores dignity and meaning to Africa's past,
10. To work with our governments, the civil society and international organizations involved in the provision of retrovirals to HIV/AIDS victims and to continue to make these available at affordable prices. While acknowledging the role that traditional medicine is playing in treatment of some of the opportunistic diseases that are associated with HIV/AIDS, we must exercise great caution not to give the impression that there are traditional cures for HIV/AIDS and protect victims of HIV/AIDS becoming victims of exploitation,
11. Reparation for the crimes committed against African people during the whole course of the slave trade by those who traded in and benefited from it, is an urgent question of our time. The AU is urged to empower the committee of eminent persons charged with development of the strategy for demanding reparations by providing it with financial resources to enable them to pursue this agenda with vigour,
12. We must pressure vigorously every avenue possible to make the debt that African states owe the international financial institutions as well as bilateral debt, to be cancelled forthwith this is one of the greatest obstacles facing African states in their development efforts and in providing social services such as health and education to our people,
13. We endorse the AU's efforts and process of recognizing the African Diaspora as the 6<sup>th</sup> of its regional institutions. This will give proof of and practical demonstration of the affinity of the continent and its work with the AU,
14. To develop in all Africa, a history curriculum that will be used in all African countries/members of the AU so that all African children in and outside Africa have a common knowledge of their history. To that end we pledge to encourage African historians and other academics to write appropriate books to have them published and disseminated. In that vein we request the Bob and Rita Marley
15. Foundations to draw up a reading list of relevant books in African history,

16. To encourage formation of study groups to pursue the study of African history,
17. To encourage African writers on the continent and in the Diaspora to write children's books that tell Africans peoples stories and set them on the road to permanent literacy and pride in themselves,
18. To endorse the 10 point demands of the Youth and to encourage our governments and civil society to recognize the importance of those points and to provide youth with the necessary resources and political support for their realization,
19. To work with the AU to make its work known in more widely than it is now; to that end participants in the Africa Unite symposium request the AU to keep them informed so that they in turn can keep their constituents aware of AU's successes and in turn give the AU the necessary support. This can be done partly by ensuring that the AU website is as up to date as possible and has a much information as possible,
20. To work with AU, ECA and other relevant research institutions to do an audit of Africa's wealth that has been taken out of Africa so that it is established that Africa's poverty is only a result of Africa's loss of control of its resources and exploitation.

### **Youth Ten Point Agenda (compressed)**

- 1 We demand the reconstruction and redefinition of the role, responsibility and structure of the African Parliament in order to gain a greater representation of African youth on the continent and our brothers and sisters in the Diaspora (The Youth Parliament is an arm of the newly constituted African Union in an effort to include the views of Youth. It is highly political in representation, has not yet met and is now considering how to include the views of all youth as they define youth as 18-35 and do not include the 12 year olds who interestingly are old enough to be brides and to go to war),
- 2 We demand access to quality and free primary, secondary and where possible, tertiary education in order to employ ourselves and gain knowledge and skills for the development of our countries and continent (Please note that the United Nations as part of the Millennium Development Goals, has set 2015 as the year by which this should be attained by all member countries.),
- 3 We demand that our history be told and shared with our children and children's children and generations to come. We want the voice of past

youths in the struggle for freedom and equality to be told by Africans for Africa,

- 4 We demand the empowerment of women and gender equality in all sectors of African society-political, cultural, social and legal,
- 5 We demand peace and reconciliation,
- 6 We demand that the voice of our young brothers and sisters living with HIV/AIDS be heard and integrated in our continental response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic,
- 7 We demand that African culture be preserved and free from negative influences and that African culture be promoted and protected within African youth and the elimination of negative cultural practices that keep young women and young people suppressed and vulnerable to HIV and AIDS,
- 8 We demand effective and progressive leadership in the African continent and governments that walk the walk and not just talk the talk,
- 9 We demand a positive African identity that is portrayed to the rest of the world, an African identity that remembers the struggles of the past and that is looking to a bright future,
- 10 We demand multi-level resources such as technical support, materials and relevant skills from local, national and international governments and development organizations to achieve our dreams of unity, love, peace and prosperity for African women, youth and children.