

ALLIANCE OF YOUTH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS FOR NATIONAL DIALOGUE



*Official Launching
of the Alliance*

LAUNCHING EVENT: ALLIANCE OF YOUTH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS FOR NATIONAL DIALOGUE

Introduction

The Alliance of Youth-focused CSOs for National Dialogue (AYCSOND) was launched on Tuesday, October 11, 2022, at Capital Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in collaboration with ECSOC. This came following the gap that was identified by ECSOC leadership and about seven youth oriented civil societies, in terms of the lack of meaningful and coordinated youth participation in the National Dialogue process. The Council has been engaged in different initiatives to support the efforts toward the success of the National Dialogue in the country and in order to bridge the gap identified, ECSOC took up the role of coordinating CSOs working with the youth to form the 'Alliance of Youth CSOs for National Dialogue'.



Overall Objective

The main purpose of forming the Alliance is to empower youth-focused & youth-led CSOs to contribute to the realization of meaningful participation of young people in the National Dialogue in principled and coordinated manner.

Specific Objectives

The Alliance of Youth Civil Society Organizations for National Dialogue (AYCSOND) has the following specific objectives:

- Engaging all young people in the national dialogue with a high standard of ethics and a spirit of foresight
- To play a coordinated and organized role in mobilizing the youth in a way that respects the principles of the national dialogue and the civil society
- Make a significant contribution to the success of the overall national dialogue by using the organizational structure and working in coordination with other similar organizations and key stakeholders

Summary on the Launching of the Alliance of Youth CSOs for National Dialogue of Proceeding

Starting off the event, Chairperson of the Interim Committee of the Alliance of Youth CSOs for the National Dialogue, Biruk Yirgalem made his welcoming remark. In his remark, Biruk stated that with the



Biruk Yirgalem, Chairperson, Interim Committee of the AYCSOND,

large percentage of the youth population, their representation to properly and actively participate in the political, economic and social sectors, they have the ability to determine the destiny of the country. He added, “Youth-oriented civil society organizations do not have the experience of participating in an organized manner in peace and democracy building apart from the activities they have been actively engaged in connection with social and humanitarian services in the past.”

In his opening remark, Executive Director of the

Ethiopian Civil Society Organization Council, Henok Melesse said “The alliance that will be formed today, aims to fill such visible gaps by ensuring the active participation of the youth,” he added, “by mobilizing young people in both rural and urban areas, it is possible to help them become active participants in the dialogue and make the process successful.”



Henok Melesse, Executive Director, ECSOC

Presentations

There were three presentations made prior to the formal launching of the alliance. The presentations addressed the general overview of the National Dialogue, the need for the involvement & meaningful participation of the youth in the National dialogue and the Alliance of Youth CSOs for the National

Dialogue. The first presenter, Moges Demissie (Ph.D), Program & Development Advisor at ECSOC highlighted the basics of National Dialogue. In his presentation he highlighted that National Dialogues provide an inclusive, broad, and participatory official negotiation framework, which can resolve political crises and lead countries into political transitions. He also explained that the process creates the platform for expanding popular participation and ensuring the democratic prospect by enlarging decision making potentials.



Moges Demissie (Ph.D), Program & Development Advisor, ECSOC

In the next presentation, Yitagesu Zewdu (Ph.D), Technical Advisor of the Interim Committee of the Alliance of Youth CSOs for the National Dialogue, took over the stage to talk about what important roles the youth can play and why the youth population is crucial in the National Dialogue process. He highlighted that the youth population is a force to be reckoned with when it comes to effecting change in a nation. He explained that a national dialogue that takes into account the needs, hopes and concerns of all young people is an urgent question that needs to be addressed.



Yitagesu Zewdu (Ph.D), Technical Advisor, Interim Committee of the AYCSOND

The final presentation was by Yemane Guesh, Vice Chairperson of Interim Committee of the Alliance of Youth



Yemane Guesh, Vice Chairperson, Interim Committee of the AYCSOND

CSOs for the National Dialogue. He walked the audience through what the alliance is all about and what activities are to be implemented through the coalition. Listing the implementation strategies Yemane clarified that mass media and social media will be key components of the communication strategy. He added that working together with the youth from each religion in a structure from the local to the national level will be another important implementation strategy among others.

Discussion Session

Following the health break, participants got the chance to raise issues they deemed important by forwarding their questions, concerns and comments. They shared their appreciation for the formation of such a long deserved alliance and commended the council for lending its support by coordinating the initiative alongside the 7 CSOs at the conception.



The participants posed the following questions:

- What particular activities are being undertaken in collaboration with the ND Commission to ensure inclusivity of the youth?
- Will the alliance be recognized as a legal entity?

- There is a huge potential in the alliance. Why the Alliance is only focused on the National Dialogue? Why not expand?
- What is being done to include the young population at regional level?
- There has been failed participation of the youth in the national election previously. Will the youth really effectively be included in the National Dialogue process?
- What is being done to ensure the sustainability of this platform?
- Are there initiatives aimed at including persons with disabilities?
- Are there sufficient considerations of what benefits the youths may gain through this process?
- What is the core of the National Dialogue?
- Are we prepared to respond to questions and requirements that can be raised by the ND Commission regarding the Alliance?
- Why wasn't the youth represented by appointing a commissioner in the NDC?
- Is the relevant government body dealing with youth i.e. the Women and Social Affairs Ministry, aware of the Alliance?
- Is the leadership in the youth-led organizations willing to step aside to younger leaders?
- Why aren't the youth included in policy making?
- Participants also shared their concerns stating that there needs to be a clearly identified age group for the youth population as there ambiguities regarding the age group that is considered youth.



Responding to most of these questions, the presenters said that the Alliance is currently ad hoc – working closely with ECSOC. Through time and process it will be recognized as a legal entity. Addressing why the alliance is only focusing on the National Dialogue only, the experts said dealing with one issue at a time ensures effective implementation of the objective of the Alliance and once that is addressed other issues of concern will be addressed step by step. Regarding persons with disabilities, it was stated that activities are already underway to ensure their active engagement.

On the side of ECSOC, it was explained that there is a team established that is tasked with following up and creating awareness on the National Dialogue Process. The council is actively working on hosting trainings and workshops in regards to this. The Council is also in the process of signing a memorandum of understanding with the NDC.

The presenters also underlined that the main role that CSOs in general can play is ensuring that the ND is properly implemented.

Closing & the Way Forward

At the closing, Executive Director of ECSOC, Henok Melesse stated that there have been several initiatives but initiatives such as the formation of the Alliance ensure sustainability. The Executive Director also added that the formation of the Alliance is a great way of cultivating collaboration. He underlined that the youth is the sole owner of the newly formed Alliance and the Council is mainly there to support the coalition as it strives to make a meaningful contribution towards the ND process.