



Western Hemisphere African Diaspora Network

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USING THE WHADN FRAME WORK TO ENHANCE UNITY TOWN HALL MEETING APRIL 14, 2007, DOUGLAS HALL, HOWARD UNIVERSITY WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Western Hemisphere African Diaspora Network (WHADN) held a Town Hall Meeting on April 14, 2007 at Howard University. The dialogue which focused on the topic, **Using the WHADN Framework to Enhance Unity**, began with an introduction from WHADN



Secretariat representative Mr. Fred Oladeinde, President of The Foundation for Democracy in Africa. Mr. Oladeinde gave a presentation on the WHADN governance structure, and shared the mission and future goals of WHADN.

Presentations on various WHADN related programs were also given by WHADN members Taranza Ganziro, Africa Free Market Foundation; Michael Okomo, Kenya Diaspora Network; Sheila Kabuki, Harambee Africa; and Yassin Hassan, Association of Tanzanian Community (ATC).

Taranza Ganziro from African Market Institute began by highlighting the need to establish an African Diaspora Development Fund in order to provide financial and banking services to the Diaspora Communities and support investments by the members of the African Diaspora in the areas of housing, small business, consumer goods and other needs. He also underscored the importance of using the Credit Union platform to reduce transaction costs associated with remittances and immigrants' efforts to support family, friends, and communities in their country of origin. The use of credit unions and reduction of associated costs would lead to increased remittances, resulting in more money available for migrants and families living in home countries.

Michael Okomo from the Kenya Diaspora Network gave a presentation on the Kenya Diaspora Network's effort to support education in Kenya through the establishment of an Education fund that presently leverages over \$300,000 to support student loans to qualified applicants in Kenya who otherwise would not have been able to attain university and vocational education because of the limited available government financial support and the lack of sponsorship by family members to support many students. The student loan program provides low interest funds that can be repaid after graduation and spread over a five to ten year period. The initiative has the support of the members from the Kenya Diaspora Network, the government of Kenya, the IFC and other international organizations supporting the capacity building efforts for Kenya.

Sheila Kabuki, representing Harambee Africa, continued by explaining the House of



Nanny, which is a project under the auspices of WHADN to reduce the devastation of HIV/AIDS on orphans and their caregivers in Africa. The program will harness resources from local community based organizations, including youth groups, faith-based organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations to implement and meet the needs of orphans

and their caregivers. Using photographs to better depict the importance of the issue, she went on to stress how by tapping into the Diaspora resources to support orphans and their caregivers, it will assist to ensure the development of a generation of African orphans who are stronger and able to lead their countries.

President of the Association of Tanzanian Community (ATC), Yassin Hassan wrapped up the presentations as he spoke about a new WHADN initiative ATC has been chosen to participate in. The focus of this pilot project is to open the lines of communication whereby the ATC located in Washington, D.C. can strengthen their relationship with the Tanzanian government in order to discuss various issues which will promote development. The efforts of this pilot project are overseen by WHADN



and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Yassin underlined how the first round of talks, which were held on March 20, 2007 at the IOM office in Washington D.C. was a great success. The ATC was able to address the areas of housing, poverty eradication, and dual citizenship. It is the goal of WHADN that this undertaking can be used in the future to promote dialogue with other African Diaspora communities and their respective home governments to increase communication and push development forward.

Following the round of presentations was a Q&A session where many questions, concerns and constructive feedback were given from those in attendance. (Among attendees was former King of Rwanda, H.E. Kigeli V Ndahindurwa.)



There were several questions and comments raised regarding the Education fund, the structure and governance of WHADN, and various avenues WHADN can use to branch out and expand. Specific questions included:

- Does the Education loan come with any restrictions?
- Is it possible for WHADN to get funding from the African Union?
- Is it possible for WHADN to establish chapters within Universities?
- Who is working the WHADN legal framework and its governance structure?

Michael Okomo answered the first question by asserting there were no restrictions regarding the area of study, however he went on to say loans are only given to Kenyan students who reside and live in the country. Furthermore the funds can not be used to go abroad and part of the repayment process must come in the form of 'giving back'; with a student assisting in a local village after s/he has completed his/her studies.

The rest of the questions and comments regarding WHADN were addressed by Fred Oladeinde. He answered the first question by explaining although WHADN was an African Union initiative so they are not obligated to fund the organization. In addition, he stressed that the direction of various programs may be in jeopardy when the majority of an organization's

funding comes from one source; therefore the need for individuals, organizations, and businesses to step forward and become active members is essential.

Some comments made suggested that WHADN establish college chapters or directly link with African American college organizations which would encourage students to become members of WHADN were both s. Mr. Oladeinde noted that the Secretariat will strongly consider working with colleges. He also went on to stress the importance of the WHADN legal framework and its governance structure which is being handled by Mr. John Jackson of the Universal Negro Improvement Association. In 2007, Mr. Jackson outlined geographical 'clusters' based on the population of Africans and African Americans, and these clusters are in the processes of being further refined so that a governance structure can be better established and a legal system can begin to be implemented.

Overall, there was immense positive energy among the many people who attended, and several became WHADN members. This meeting is the first among many more, as WHADN will be presenting nationwide in efforts to broaden and strengthen the membership base.

For more information regarding WHADN or this event, please visit the following websites: www.whadn.org

The Town Hall Meeting concluded around 5:30 p.m.

NOTE:

The Secretariat requests all participants to complete the membership registration forms that include: (each form is available online: www.whadn.org)

- Individual/Student membership
- Business membership
- Non Profit Membership

Effective May 1, 2007 all WHADN members are expected to pay their dues to be in good standing with the secretariat, and each member organization will be requested to nominate a permanent representative to the secretariat to ensure that every membership organization views and interests are well represented in the network organization.

The secretariat also asks each participant to help recruit new members and provide information on WHADN to other Diaspora organizations. Members are encouraged to visit the website frequently and those able to volunteer please visit the secretariat to help on the membership and fund raising drives.