



# የማኅበራዊ ጥናት መድረክ (ማፕመ) Forum for Social Studies (FSS)

## Press Release

(28 March 2008, Addis Ababa)

In the short life span since its emergence on the Ethiopian scene, Civil Society has made tangible contributions through relief and development interventions, advocacy and policy research and dialogue. Nevertheless, as demonstrated by the research findings and their discussions at the CSO conference jointly organised by FSS, OSJE and UECSA on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2007, Civil Society in Ethiopia continues to face critical challenges from within and without. One of the major concerns raised at the October Conference was that the current legislative process to develop a new regulatory framework has not yet enabled a broad spectrum of the civil society community to actively participate in and contribute to the process. Cognisant of the gap in proactive engagement, the Conference recommended the creation of further public platforms for policy dialogue on civil society issues, including an enabling legal and policy environment.

Consequently, FSS has launched an international conference on the occasion of its Tenth Anniversary to sustain the dialogue between the policy makers and CSOs in particular and among members of Civil Society in general. More specifically, the Conference is aimed at:

1. facilitating for government policy makers and CSOs to share from international experiences in the creation of an enabling policy environment, including creating space for a participatory policy-making process;
2. enabling CSOs to gain insights from international practices in nurturing a democratic organisational culture, policy engagement, networking and coalition building;
3. providing a platform for dialogue on enhancing the role of civil society in democratic and development processes in Ethiopia.

The conference, which is organised with financial support from ActionAid/Ethiopia and the European Union, is held on **28 March 2008 at the Hilton Hotel** in Addis Ababa. Speakers on international civil society experiences include Mr Kumi Naidoo (Secretary General, CIVICUS), Dr Gerry Salole (CEO, European Foundation Centre), Mr Brian Kagoro (Pan African Policy Manager, ActionAid), while speakers on national experiences include Ato Dessalegn Rahmato (Senior Research Fellow, FSS), W/ro Meaza Ashenafi (Board Chairperson, National Organization of Women), W/ro Aster Birke (FSS Board Chairperson) and Ato Debebe Habtegebriel (Consultant for *CSO Task Force on Creating an Enabling Environment for Civil Society in Ethiopia*). The one-day conference is expected to conclude with a deliberation on the way forward pertaining to the regulatory and policy environment for civil society in Ethiopia.

Over 200 participants drawn from policy makers, the civil society community, the donor community, researchers and other stakeholders were invited to attend the conference.

