The African Development Bank organized the Civil Society Forum 2018, as a three-day event at HQ in Abidjan, on the topic: "Engaging Civil Society to Accelerate Africa's Industrialization".

For the first time in the Bank's history, the Forum took place separately from the Annual Meetings. This new format provided an enhanced platform for the continent's civil society organizations (CSOs) to engage in dialogue and exchange views with the Bank—upholding the Bank's commitment to engage with CSOs, and view them as key partners to successfully implement and achieve the High 5 priorities.

The Forum brought together over 300 participants from across the continent. The delegates included civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), social entrepreneurs, representatives from the private sector, and Bank Senior Management and staff. Discussions revolved around the Bank's engagement with Civil Society, and the key mechanisms needed to strengthen future collaborations.

The plenaries and parallel sessions focused on the central theme of this year's Forum "Industrialization". The sessions addressed the key challenges to Africa's industrialization, and the role that Civil Society can play in ensuring the implementation of the Bank's "Industrialize Africa" strategy is inclusive and sustainable.

To ensure that the Forum reflected the diverse concerns of CSOs on Africa's industrialization, the Bank provided the opportunity for CSOs to organize and lead six parallel sessions. The CSO led sessions were very innovative and constructive with topics on: (i) Agriculture-based Inclusive Industrialization in Africa; (ii) The Blue Economy and Blue Energy (New nuclear power): Invaluable Assets in Accelerating Africa's Industrialization; (iii) Accelerating Africa's Industrialization: A Panacea for Youth Unemployment; (iv) Bridging Energy Access Gap for the Industrialization of Africa; (v) Digital Equality for Africa’s Industrialization, and; (vi) Illicit Financial Flows in Extractives – Implications for Industrialization. Moreover, CSO representatives were also given the lead to moderate working group sessions on three of the enablers that the "Industrialize Africa" Strategy relies on to successfully industrialize Africa: inclusive industrial policy, fourth industrial revolution, and competitive talents and entrepreneurship.

During the Forum's closing ceremony, the CSO representatives presented the conclusions of the three working group sessions, with three respective recommendations to the Bank:

1. Create a multi-stakeholder platform with representatives from the public sector, private sector, the Bank and Civil Society—to guarantee the involvement of all actors in the development of industrial policies and projects.
2. Promote equal access to digital tools for networking, capacity building, skills improvement, and data production purposes—to inclusively accelerate Africa's industrialization.
3. Establish capacity building programs that integrate gender lens training in the design of Bank policies and strategies—to improve the business environment in regional member countries so all entrepreneurs can grow and flourish.

A historical mark in the closing ceremony was the launch of the new AfDB - Civil Society Committee, and its 11 CSO members working on one or more of the Bank's Hi5 priorities. The Committee will be an advisory board and a key channel of communication to guide the Bank's engagement with Civil Society. The re-launch of the AfDB Civil Society Committee shows the Bank's institutional commitment to engaging with Civil Society, following the creation of the Civil Society and Social Innovation Division (AHGC2).

Alongside the Forum, an interactive, action-oriented workshop took place on May 9th on the Fourth Sector Development in Africa: Scaling Private Enterprises for Public Good. The Workshop was organized to bring together Bank staff interested in emerging alternative development approaches, social impact entrepreneurs, and civil society leaders from across Africa dedicated to positive social and environmental impacts. The objective, which was successfully achieved, was to engage in vigorous discussions on the opportunities and barriers associated with the new Fourth sector model for sustainable, inclusive development across Africa.

The dynamism that resulted from the change in format of the Forum was remarkable. The participants applauded the Bank, and agreed that separating the Forum from the Annual meetings allowed more effective interactions, and enriched exchanges in lessons learned and experience-sharing amongst the delegates and the Bank. The Civil Society representatives are now counting on the Bank to implement the recommendations they provided, and to continue being engaged as key partners at the Bank.
OPENING PLENARY

ORIENTATION SESSION BY AfDB MANAGEMENT

HOW CAN WE ENGAGE CIVIL SOCIETY IN ACCELERATING AFRICA’S INDUSTRIALIZATION
STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT AT COUNTRY LEVEL: IMPROVING COORDINATION AMONG STAKEHOLDERS

1. Oley DIBBA-WADDIA - Director Human Capital, Youth and Skills Development
2. Christian Cardon - Head of Delegation ICRC in Côte d’Ivoire
3. Justine COULIDATI - Regional Coordinator of G5 Sahel Women’s Network
4. Sibry TAPSOBA - Director of Transition States Coordination Office
5. Thierry GATETE - Senior Research Fellow IPAR
6. Charles GIRARD - Representative of the European Union Delegation in Côte d’Ivoire

ENABLING THE SOCIAL IMPACT AND INNOVATION SECTOR TO ENSURE AFRICA’S INCLUSIVE INDUSTRIALIZATION

1. Jacklyne Kameel Wahba Hanaa - Managing Director of Nahdet El Mahrousa
2. Heerad Sabeti - Founder and CEO of Fourth Sector Group
3. Rachel Aron - Principal Social Development Specialist at AfDB
4. Hannatu Onogu - Business Development Manager at Solar Sister Nigeria
5. Paul Simister - Private Sector Development Adviser at DFID
CLOSING CEREMONY AND OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE AFDB CIVIL SOCIETY COMMITTEE

CIVIL SOCIETY TEAM