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## **Ethiopian government assures African delegation on future of anti-poverty campaign and detained civil society leaders**

*NOTE TO EDITORS: The press conference in Johannesburg, scheduled for 4pm today has been cancelled. However, Kumi Naidoo, CIVICUS Secretary General is available for one-on-one interviews from 5pm this evening, and throughout this week.*

10 April 2006 - After a series of high-level meetings in Ethiopia last week, a delegation of African religious and civil society leaders announced that they have received positive assurances on the future of the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) campaign in Ethiopia and the legal cases facing two Ethiopian coordinators of the campaign currently in detention.

Led by the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane, the delegation included Kumi Naidoo, Secretary General of CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Henry Malumo, representative from the African Facilitation Group for GCAP and Salil Shetty, Director of UN Millennium Campaign.

Acknowledging the positive contributions of GCAP in securing debt cancellation, increased aid pledges and better trade terms for the African continent, Ethiopian Prime Minister Zenawi Meles told the delegation that he would welcome the resumption of the GCAP campaign in Ethiopia. In addition to government, the delegation also briefed leaders from civil society organisations and religious organisations.

*“Over 2005, the Global Call to Action against Poverty was embraced by over 100 national coalitions across the world. 25 of these coalitions are in Africa. Regrettably, the challenging political environment has prevented a vibrant campaign to emerge in Ethiopia. Given both Ethiopia’s historical importance on the world development stage and the international profile of the Prime Minister, we were reassured to hear from the Prime Minister, that recognising the value of this campaign, he welcomed the resumption of the campaign in Ethiopia in 2006,”* said Kumi Naidoo, CIVICUS Secretary General.

The delegation also met with the detained GCAP campaign coordinators, Daniel Bekele, lawyer and policy manager of the ActionAid office in Ethiopia and Netsanet Demissie, environmental and human rights lawyer and chair of the Organisation for Social Justice in Ethiopia. Senior government officials assured the delegation that Daniel and Netsanet would

be accorded a swift hearing and that their trials will be conducted in a completely open and transparent manner.

According to the Archbishop, the delegation hoped *“to offer solidarity and support as Ethiopians collectively search for solutions to urgently re-open political and civic space and re-establish trust and dialogue.”* During his visit, the Archbishop met with the Patriarch of Ethiopia and the Catholic Archbishop of Addis Ababa, among others.

For further information, and to schedule interviews, please contact:

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**CIVICUS:** <http://www.civicus.org> and [www.civilsocietywatch.org](http://www.civilsocietywatch.org).

**Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP):** <http://www.whiteband.org>.