Introducing the African Sovereign Debt Justice Network (AfSDJN)

By:

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On 1st October 2020, the International Monetary Fund called for measures to prevent “a much more pronounced debt crisis’ in the poorest countries of the world as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Afronomicslaw.org’s four week COVID-19 and International Economic Law symposium of May 2020, among other themes, explored the implications the COVID-19 pandemic raised for sovereign debt in developing countries.

In early June 2020, Afronomicslaw.org hosted a webinar that focused on how domestic law was used to overturn illegal sovereign debt in Mozambique. That webinar and a written symposium focusing on that decision showed the mobilizational power of civil society groups not only to expose hidden sovereign debt, but also to take positive action to hold those accountable in multiple jurisdictions with civil and criminal actions.

Inspired by the mobilizational power of combining civil society activism and the

analytical power that our contributors have brought to this forum over the last several months, Afronomicslaw.org is delighted to announce the formation of the African Sovereign Debt Justice Network, (AfSDJN).

A primary objective of the AfSDJN is to undertake research, advocacy, tactics and strategies around the changing nature of debt, globally and in Africa, which threatens economic development, social cohesion and several gains made in building social contracts in recent years. Afronomicslaw.org is grateful to Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, (OSISA) Economic Justice Program and Open Society Foundation's African Regional Office.

It seeks to do this in a number of ways with a particular focus on Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Nigeria and Senegal by producing research outputs, including toolkits, which enhance the advocacy interventions of these actors; creating awareness on and elevate the priority given to sovereign debt and other economic justice issues on the African continent and beyond, through its network activities. These activities include public webinars, written symposiums and high-level interventions at important political events taking place on the African continent and beyond over the next 12 months. We hope to increase research and activist engagement in the area of sovereign debt and other economic justice issues on the African continent by contributing to building human capacity and technical expertise on these issues. In doing so, we look forward to with civil society groups and individuals who have expertise in this important area.

Another important objective of the AfSDJN will be to press private and sovereign creditors to write-off, restructure or postpone debt owed by African countries and to focus the conversation on sovereign debt on the responsibilities of the lenders and not merely sovereign borrowers. It will also mobilize critical stakeholders who can influence policy on the debt question at the international, regional (African) and national levels with the select African countries aforementioned.

The members of the AfSDJN are:

1. Afronomicslaw.org as convenors

2. Father Charles Chilufya, of the Jesuit Justice and Ecology Network Africa;
3. Crystal Simeoni, Director, Nawi: Afrifem Macroeconomics Collective;
4. Oluseun Onigbinde Director, BudgIT – a civic organization based in Nigeria and Sierra Leone focused on data transparency and increasing access to public finance information to strengthen the capacity of citizens to hold governments accountable;
5. Ndongo Ndamba Sylla, Program and Research Manager chez Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (Dakar)
6. Denise Namburete, N'weti, Mozambique
7. Muloongo Muchelemba Founder, www.Ongolo.com, a blog aimed at changing the narrative on Africa
8. Rumbi Chisenga, Member, Inaugural Obama Foundation Scholars, Columbia University
9. The Fellowship of Christian Councils in Southern Africa (FOCCISA)
10. The Fellowship of Councils in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECLAHA)
11. Afrodad

We will announce the formal launch of the AfSDJN, its final composition and its activities before too long. In the meantime, please help spread the word about our search for an AfSDJN Coordinator, Web-Designer and an Editorial Assistant posted together with this announcement.

Quite appropriately, this week, Afronomicslaw.org is running a symposium on You can find here my last publication Annamaria Viterbo's book Sovereign Debt Restructuring: The Role and Limits of Public International Law, Giappichelli, 2020.

We thank all our contributors, readers and supporters and we look forward to working with all of you to achieve the goals of the AfSDJN. We cannot do this without your continued support!

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