NGO observer status with the AU

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NGO observer status with the AU

The July 2005 AU summit held in Sirte, Libya revised the criteria and procedures for granting observer status with the African Union to non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

NGOs seeking observer status must be registered in an African state, managed by a majority of African citizens or diaspora, and must derive at least two-thirds of their income from membership contributions.

NGOs with observer status undertake to hold regular consultations with the AU and submit a report every three years on their cooperation with the AU. They have access to the open sessions of summit meetings, and may be invited to participate in sessions of closed meetings relevant to their area of interest. So far, 49 African NGOs have been granted observer status with the AU.

NGOs have called for the amendment of these rules, particularly the requirement that organisations seeking observer status must have two-thirds funding from their own members. CIDO has been tasked to review the observer status procedures.

Criteria to obtain observer status with the African Union:
- Registration in an AU Member State.
- In operation for at least three years.
- A democratically adopted constitution.
- Management made up of a majority of African citizens or members of African diaspora.
- Basic resources derived at least two-thirds from membership contributions
- respect and application of non-discrimination principles.

Application procedure:
- Applications must be submitted six months prior to the Executive Council meetings.
- Diaspora organisations require references from two Member States and an NGO recognised by the AU.
- Organisations working on similar issues are encouraged to apply for observer status as a coalition or joint committee.

Criteria for granting African Union Observer Status to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) available at the AU website: www.africa-union.org/Summit/JULY%202005/