

**Representatives of member organisations of the ACCA,
distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is both an honour and a pleasure to welcome you to the 4th General Assembly of the African Coalition for Corporate Accountability (ACCA). For those who have recently joined the ACCA community, I would like to begin by saying that the ACCA was launched in 2013. Today, the ACCA has more than 118 member organisations from more than 28 African countries.

I am delighted by your attendance at this event, which bears witness to your vested interest in our objective as a Coalition, that of defending and supporting African communities and individuals whose rights are adversely impacted by the activities of business. Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) has been selected as the theme for this year's GA.

Free, prior and informed consent is a right recognised under international law. Respecting the right to FPIC seeks to ensure that project developers operate with relevant permits, and do not impose their programmes on communities, nor adversely impact their lives.

FPIC has been largely accepted in businesses' "social responsibility" policies working in the field of dam construction, extractive industries, forestry, plantations, conservation, and environmental impact assessment, to name a few.

I will not delve into the theme of FPIC, as our discussions around FPIC will shape our two-day event.

**Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

In preparing the agenda for this year's event, the ACCA Steering Committee (SC) members, together with the ACCA Secretariat, took into account the comments and suggestions received from the membership.



For example, it was decided that community members will deliver the keynote address, with the hope that their address will inform our deliberation during this two-day gathering. Allowing communities to come share their experience of lived realities, testimonies, and daily lives strengthens the idea that we, as the ACCA, remain closely connected to the communities who we aim to support.

Following the comments and suggestions received from our membership on how the ACCA can improve its GA's and how the ACCA can be more useful to its membership, we have decided to host the first NGO fair at the ACCA GA. The NGO fair seeks to maximise networking opportunities along with areas for collaboration between both member organisations and partner organisations of the ACCA. Participants will also have the opportunity of engaging directly with funders present in the room. This NGO fair seeks to provide participants with the opportunity to showcase their work and allow participants to learn more one another's work.

We strongly encourage you, dear participations, to actively participate in this event, which comes as a response to the needs of our member organisations, having expressed their needs for further visibility in the region and beyond. The SC members reiterate our commitment to continue responding to the needs of the ACCA member organisations, and implementing your recommendations.

We have also committed to making more use of videos and other social media platforms, which you will note throughout the GA.

I cannot conclude my remarks without acknowledging the gratitude of the SC members to all those who have helped in the planning of this GA. I would like to acknowledge the Centre for Human Rights at the Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria - the host institution of the ACCA. I would also like to thank Josua Loots, Damian Oakes the Coordinator of the ACCA, Guillain Koko, the Projects' Coordinator of the ACCA, who joined us in May this year. I would also like to thank our funders for their unwavering financial support. I would like to openly acknowledge Open



Society Foundation (OSF), Ford Foundation, 11th Hour Project along with a funder which wishes to remain anonymous.

A special vote of thanks to the ACCA's partner organisation for their helping hand in arranging this important event: Natural Resources alliance of Kenya (KeNRA). We would like to thank Mwambi, Claire, Regina and Anne for their tireless efforts in ensuring the success of this event.

Finally, a special thank you to each one of you, dear participants, gathered here, for your active contribution towards the ACCA's success.

It is on this vote of thanks, that I, on behalf of the ACCA Steering Committee and the ACCA Secretariat, wish you a successful deliberation at the 4th ACCA GA.

Thank you!

