

AFRICAN UNION

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EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
Fifteenth Ordinary Session
24 – 30 June, 2009
Sirte, Libya

EX.CL/ 527 (XV)

**REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY OF ECOSOCC**

**REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE PERMANENT GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COUNCIL
OF THE AFRICAN UNION (ECOSOCC)**

Council will recall that at its 14th Ordinary Session held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in January 2009, I noted that the Permanent General Assembly would assign priority to implementing the mandate given it by the previous session of Council in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt to ensure that the process of elections is completed in Member States of the Union where they have not yet been held.

The emphasis on assigning priority to this task was based on the need to ensure that the process of civil society participation in the African Union would be both inclusive and comprehensive. It would be inclusive in the sense that it will embrace citizens of all Member States of the African Union and comprehensive in the sense that it would take into account the needs and aspirations of all Africans on the Continent and the Diaspora. Significantly also the process will buttress the legitimacy of ECOSOCC as the effective organ for civil society intervention and the people-driven security and development of the Union as a whole.

COMPLETION OF ELECTION PROCESSES IN ECOSOCC

As I indicated in the course of the last Ordinary Session of Council, the ECOSOCC Secretariat in CIDO had been given responsibility to re-advertise the processes and solicit application in the remaining Member States where elections had not taken place. The Secretariat carried out its duty diligently and several applications were received in this context. Moreover, in order to accelerate the tempo of this exercise, the Credentials Committee and the Secretariat sent five different regions teams to different regions of the Continent to sensitize the African public and mobilize support for this process. The teams visited Togo, Senegal, Gambia, Seychelles, Rwanda, Djibouti, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Chad, RDC, Gabon, RCA, Equatorial Guinea and Libya amongst other. The outcome was a deluge of applications that set the pace for vetting and accreditation of the candidates by the Credentials Committee.

Subsequently, the Credentials Committee met twice in Cairo, Egypt from 22-24 February 2009 and Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire from 30 April - 4 May 2009 to accredit qualified candidates for Composite elections that were held in Yaoundé, Cameroon from 21-24 May 2009. As a result new members of the Permanent General Assembly were elected from Angola, Djibouti, Rwanda, Lesotho, Libya, Mozambique, Senegal, Seychelles, Swaziland, Togo, Central and North Africa regions.

THE 4th ORDINARY SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF ECOSOCC

The new members were sworn in by the 4th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of ECOSOCC that was convened immediately after the Composite elections in Yaoundé, Cameroon from 25-26 May 2009 to elect the Standing Committee of ECOSOCC, the executive instrument that will coordinate the work of the Permanent General Assembly.

The Standing Committee was elected on regional basis, with each region producing three members each.

The ECOSOCC Assembly elected the following Members as the Chair of the various clusters as follow:

1. Prof Dipo Kolawole - Peace and Security Cluster -West Africa
2. Mr Joseph Chilengi – Political Affairs Cluster – Southern Africa
3. Mr Muzwakhe Sighudla – Social Affairs Cluster- Southern Africa
4. Mr Nduwayo Onesphore – Infrastructure and Energy Cluster – West Africa
5. Dr Amany Asfour – Human, Resource, Science and Technology –North Africa
6. Mr Diop Moussa – Gender- West Africa
7. Mr Tarig Abdel Fatah – Commerce, Trade and Industry- East Africa
8. Mr Hersi – Rural Agriculture Cluster – East Africa
9. Mrs Odette Gema Diloya – Economic Affairs Cluster- Central Africa
10. Mr Abdulhadi Lahweej – Cross – cutting programme Cluster- North Africa

The activation of Cluster Committees has set the pace for the full operationalization of ECOSOCC. The Committees will work with the various departments of the Commission and organs and units or instruments of the Union in order to achieve their objectives. In particular the Peace and Security Cluster Committee will start to coordinate CSO interaction with Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the Union in accordance with the Livingstone formula adopted by the Peace and Security Council in December 2008.

THE AU-EU PARTNERSHIP

ECOSOCC has also been active in support of the Africa-Europe Partnership. This facilitated the second AU-CSO consultation on the implementation of the Africa-Europe partnership in Kenya, from 3-5 March 2009. The consultation assessed the progress of the partnership one year after its inception reviewed the initial and current phase of its implementation with emphasis on the Joint Expert and Working Groups and examined and refined the organisational processes of African civil society participation within them.

As part of the process, the consultation reconstituted the AU-Civil Society Steering Committee on the Africa-Europe partnership that was set up in Accra in 2007 under ECOSOCC leadership. It is significant that the AU process was a pace-setter in this regard as the outcome of the Communiqué of the Accra-EU Ministers in Luxembourg in late April 2009 acknowledged. The structure and models established by the African civil society was replicated in Europe, which set up an EU-CSO Steering Committee in Spring 2008 as a counterpart for the African process. ECOSOCC will continue to follow through on this process and recent activation of its Cluster Committees will support this development in appropriate thematic areas. All the Cluster Committee Chairpersons are members of the reconstituted AU-CSO Steering Committee on the AU-EU partnership

MAPPING OF AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION

ECOSOCC through its Secretariat in CIDO has also set in motion the process of mapping African civil society organisations. This was one of the key recommendations of the Audit Panel of the Union that was endorsed by Council and the Assembly.

The objective of the mapping exercise is to identify CSOs in the various thematic areas and use this to strengthen their representation, participation and foster partnership globally and within the African union framework. The exercise will allow for a better interface between AU, Member States and Civil Society and provide effective support for electoral processes of ECOSOCC and its contribution to the wider family of the African Union. The mapping of civil society organisations would also help the AU to identify the required technical support from the larger civil society community.

The mapping process commenced with a workshop facilitated by CIDO in Nairobi, Kenya from 28-31 May 2009 soon after the conclusion of the ECOSOCC General Assembly in Yaounde.

It produced a framework document for the mapping process that outlined its purpose, rationale, objectives, expected benefits, a scope of the data base, identification and classification system, storage, planning and resource requirements, milestones and timeframes. An Expert Group meeting will follow to elaborate this into a larger project document for policymakers so that the project will commence in earnest by January/February 2009. We anticipate a 12 month period for the completion of the first phase after which the database will be constantly and periodically updated.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it is clear that the Permanent General Assembly of ECOSOCC has taken its responsibilities seriously. It has paired the process of institution-building of the organ with the need to develop and implement programme and activities. It has also married the requirement of the consolidation of its own structures with the need to develop appropriate inter-organ relationship with other units of the African Union. Concurrently, ECOSOCC has also embarked on a process of mobilization and sensitization to build support among Member States of the Union for both ECOSOCC and the African Union in general. This is a value that we wish to share with other organs in order to achieve the lofty objectives of creating and sustaining a people-oriented African Union that will deliver on its promises to our people.

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