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**REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL  
COUNCIL OF THE AFRICA UNION (ECOSOCC)**

## REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COUNCIL OF THE AFRICA UNION (ECOSOCC)

1. The Executive Council will recall that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Permanent General Assembly of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union was inaugurated in Nairobi, Kenya on 22 December 2014. Subsequently, in my maiden address to the 26<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union held in Addis Ababa from 26-27 January 2015, I noted that the focus of the new ECOSOCC Assembly will be to promote the people-centred aspirations contained in the Constitutive Act of the Union and to harness the lessons of the 1<sup>st</sup> General Assembly and feed it into the process of ensuring that the 2<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly will achieve the goals and objectives for which it was set up.

2. Accordingly, I highlighted the priorities set by the 1<sup>st</sup> Ordinary Session of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Permanent ECOSOCC General Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya to achieve these goals. These include an induction and orientation exercise to associate new members of the ECOSOCC Assembly with rules, procedures, regulations and processes of the Union so that the Assembly will have a proper compass and orientation and be essentially rule-based. Second is to continue with the process of institutional consolidation of ECOSOCC through the invigoration of the work of the Credentials Committee and continuing by-elections over a one-year period to fill the outstanding vacancies in the ECOSOCC General Assembly and thus to ensure wider representativity across Member States of the Union. Third and related to this, is the strengthening of the Secretariat of ECOSOCC in CIDO to anchor the people-centred nexus of the Constitutive Act of the Union (Article 3), support the work of ECOSOCC (EX.CL/633(XVIII)) and to implement the outcome of the Global Diaspora Summit as ratified by the Assembly Decision **Assembly/AU/Dec.354(XVI)**.

3. The fourth order priority is effective ECOSOCC engagement with affairs of the continent including the various crisis and conflicts as well as issues related to social and economic development. Fifth is to activate the Sectoral Cluster Committees to popularize AU, mobilize support for Agenda 2063, the Post 2015 Development Agenda and policy frameworks such as CAADP and FIDA. Sixth and final, is to continue with sensitization of the African publics in the various Member States to support AU policies and programs and to begin the processes of the building and consolidation of National ECOSOCC Chapters in each Member State of the Union as a framework for disseminating information and building support for AU program and activities. I am happy to inform this august Council that work has commenced effectively and with tangible results in all the areas.

4. To begin, an induction and orientation session of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Permanent General Assembly of ECOSOCC was held in Cairo, Egypt from 27 March – 1 April 2015. I would like to thank the Government and people of the Arab Democratic Republic of Egypt for strong support which enable the meeting to achieve its objectives. The Orientation and Induction exercise promoted deep understanding among members about the African Union, the Constitutive Act, key organs and structures as well as administrative,

financial and other rules and regulation. Hence, it provided a logical foundation for ECOSOCC Members to fully appreciate their roles, duties and responsibility and the organizational parameters in which they must operate.

**5.** It also provided a context for the 2<sup>nd</sup> ECOSOCC General Assembly to establish internal rules and norms that would guide its own operation. In this regard, the ECOSOCC Assembly, with the assistance and support of the Office of the Legal Counsel and the Secretariat in CIDO, adopted its Internal Rules and Procedures which would be reviewed by the Specialized Technical Committee of Justice Ministers at their next session (October/November 2015) in preparation for the consideration of the Executive Council at its 28<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session in January 2016 through the Permanent Representative Committee (PRC).

**6.** The process of the institutional consolidation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Permanent ECOSOCC Assembly continues apace. The ECOSOCC General Assembly meeting held in Cairo, Egypt in February/March 2015 established an appropriate roadmap for this process. Consequently, the Secretariat in CIDO extended and re-opened the application process till 31 December 2015 to reinvigorate the process. The Credentials Committee will meet soon after the June 2015 Summit in Maseru, Lesotho to set a calendar and timetable for new elections and to provide guidance to the AU Interdepartmental Committee on Verification and Eligibility of candidates. It is expected therefore that regional and national elections to fill existing ECOSOCC vacancies will be conducted appropriately in the third and fourth quarter of year 2015 to increase the scope and reach of ECOSOCC membership to embrace all Member States of the Union.

**7.** ECOSOCC has become more fully engaged with the activities of the Union at large, the AU family of organs and the lives and aspiration of ordinary African citizens. In order to advance its work programs and to popularize the programs and policies of the AU, the Presiding Officer and other members have conducted sensitization programs in Egypt, Sudan and Nigeria amongst others and through effective participation in the 26<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Commission of Human and Peoples' Rights, the Cameroon Business Forum, the International Symposium for launching African Initiative on Peace and Development held in Benin in late May 2015, the Pan-African Parliament meeting on Ratification of AU Treaties held in Abuja in April 2015 and other forums and gatherings at Member States, regional continental and international fora. ECOSOCC has also issued policy and advisory statements on contemporary developments of concern in Africa including the incidence of xenophobia in Africa and the crisis in Burundi amongst others.

**8.** ECOSOCC has also been engaged with the operationalization of Sectoral Cluster Committees as key operational mechanisms of the Organ as well as the development of modalities and principles for the institutionalization of ECOSOCC National Chapters as instruments of accountability across the range of Member States of the Union. The operational modalities are in the process of consolidation and it is anticipated that a framework document in both areas will be presented to the next Ordinary Session of the Executive Council and Assembly of the Union.

**9.** The strengthening of the Secretariat in CIDO is also one of our priorities. As I noted earlier this has been the subject of various Council and Assembly decisions as well as Declaration of the Global Diaspora Summit in which Africa established a global compact with eighty-nine other countries comprising people of African descent. It is heartening that the process of recruitment in the AU Commission has begun to bring young and devoted regular staff into CIDO as part of the mainstream. However, recent proposals emanating from the AU Commission appear to favour a process for the downgrading the civil society and diaspora structures of the Union. ECOSOCC has major concerns about this. The transformation of OAU into the AU was designed to create a people-centred and people-driven integration community. Accordingly, the structures of the AU that validates and drives the process such as ECOSOCC and CIDO in the Commission should be upgraded and treated shared services rather than diminished. This is the essence of various Council, Assembly and Diaspora Summit decisions that I have cited above.

**10.** The manner in which the reform processes are being pursued is also a cause for attention. It seems to be a Commission dominated process that does not involve other organs of the Union. The reform agenda was not on the original budget agenda of the meeting held in Mekelle, Ethiopia from 9-16 May 2015 but was surreptitiously introduced with premium on seeking decision. ECOSOCC intervention in the process was scuttled as we were told that ECOSOCC was not supposed to have been given the floor to air its concerns.

**11.** This is surprising. First, because ECOSOCC has its Secretariat in CIDO in the Commission. The Organ works closely, and I must add, harmoniously with CIDO. Thus matters affecting re-organization within the Commission must necessarily involve ECOSOCC. Second, the people centred nexus of the African Union places premium on openness, transparently and accountability. Affairs involving the African Union are family matters that must engage the broad spectrum of AU organs.

**12.** Thirdly, any process of organization or re-organization of the AU must give prominence to the people-centred focus of the preamble and principles of the Constitutive Act. ECOSOCC would insist that we respect these principles which are elaborated in the various decisions of Council and Assembly of the Union.

**13.** Fourthly, the provenance of the structural reforms proposals and the methods adapted to them give room for concern. The proposals are based on a business model that is ill adapted to the AU which is a public enterprise. In the AU context, the highest commercial value is public good.

**14.** Besides, ECOSOCC kindly requests the need for congruence and coherence in the civil society activities of the Union. Today, the Commission and various organs of the Union are inundated with agreements and partnerships, formal and informal with various CSO organizations. The Union has no way of keeping track of the names of the organization, what they are doing and the value that they bring to the Union. The Union has no database on CSOs working with its various arms, their relations and operations and the added value of their participation. This is at variance with the practice of

Member States and all international organizations. ECOSOCC believes that the time has come to effectively coordinate civil society activities and interventions in support of the Union through ECOSOCC in accordance with the established practice elsewhere. We request therefore, that Council take a decision that, as is the case with the UN and similar international organization, all CSOs dealing with the African Union must have a consultative or observer status with AU-ECOSOCC. This will provide a comprehensive database of actors and interventions, enable the executive organs to keep track of activities, remove duplication and promote complementarity in CSO interventions, enable the Union to perceive missing links in the chain of activities so that it can fill them and allow for effective interconnectivity of civil society and Member State activities. The Credentials and Standing Committee of ECOSOCC should assume obligations to oversee this process.

**15.** Finally, I want to thank the Permanent Representative Committee (PRC) of the Union for their effective support for the ECOSOCC Process in the budget sessions in Mekelle and for making provisions that will support our critical objective of operationalization of the Sectoral Cluster Committees and institutionalization of ECOSOCC National Chapters. The Standing Committee of ECOSOCC that met in Khartoum, Sudan, from 26-28 May 2015 to consider and approve this report also agreed on measures to develop and consummate this process. This priority alongside others mentioned earlier will be the focus of ECOSOCC in the second half of this year 2015 and we expect to give a credible report on its progress to the next Ordinary sessions of the Executive Council and Assembly in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in January 2016.

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