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**EXECUTIVE COUNCIL  
Thirteenth Ordinary Session  
24 – 28 June 2008  
Sharm El-Sheikh, EGYPT**

**EX.CL/412 (XIII)**

**REPORT ON ELECTIONS AND PREPARATIONS FOR  
LAUNCHING THE PERMANENT ASSEMBLY OF THE  
ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COUNCIL  
(ECOSOCC) OF THE AFRICAN UNION**

**REPORT ON ELECTIONS AND PREPARATIONS FOR LAUNCHING THE  
PERMANENT ASSEMBLY OF THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL  
COUNCIL (ECOSOCC) OF THE AFRICAN UNION**

1. Council will recall that at its 12<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in January 2008, the Interim Standing Committee presented a report on the progress of the process of elections into the Interim General Assembly of ECOSOCC. The report highlighted challenges and difficulties accompanying this process and observed that it had not yet been possible to conclude the process of elections as anticipated. It then recommended three options for consideration of Council as follows:

**Option 1:** That ECOSOCC be launched with the limited candidates already elected at the time and that subsequently, the Permanent ECOSOCC Assembly can then assume the responsibility for finalizing the election process.

**Option 2:** To allow ECOSOCC a further limited timeline to proceed with the election process so that a critical mass of candidates would be elected to establish the Permanent Assembly, leaving the process to be completed via by elections as appropriate under the aegis of the Permanent Assembly after its inauguration.

**Option 3:** To extend the life of the Interim Assembly indefinitely until it can complete the election process in all Member States of the Union.

**I. Executive Council Decision (Ex.CL/Dec.384(XII))**

2. Council deliberated on the options presented by the Interim Standing Committee of ECOSOCC. It concluded that the 1<sup>st</sup> option was not suitable because the number of candidates elected up till then was not yet sufficient to provide a foundation for the Permanent General Assembly of ECOSOCC. This option would also extend the election process unduly as the new ECOSOCC Assembly would take on the burden of the large proportion of elections. On the other hand, option 3 would extend the term of the Interim Assembly indefinitely whereas the expectation of the provision of the statute was that an Interim body would operate in a limited period. The interim body had already spent almost three years and such extension would give it a life extending to and even beyond the tenure of a Permanent Assembly that is expected to be in office for four years. Council then adopted option 2 to give four extra months to the Interim ECOSOCC, until 30 April 2008, to proceed with the process and create a critical mass of elected delegates to launch the Assembly on 30 May 2008, leaving the subsequent Permanent Assembly to complete the process through by-elections in the remaining Member States.

3. Consequently in its Decision EX/CL/384(XII), Council decided to extend the mandate of the Interim ECOSOCC Assembly until 30 April 2008 to facilitate its task of organizing elections into the Permanent General Assembly of ECOSOCC and requested the AU Commission to take appropriate measures to launch the Permanent General Assembly of ECOSOCC by 30 May 2008. It then mandated the Permanent

General Assembly of ECOSOCC to complete the election process in Member States and regions that may not have conducted the elections by the time the first Permanent General Assembly is launched.

## **II. Measures taken to Implement Council Decision.**

4. Following the session of Council, the Interim Standing Committee of ECOSOCC in close consultations with the Commission, took necessary steps to accelerate process of elections in Member States of the Union. Consequently, elections were held in Malawi, Niger, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Mauritius and Benin. In addition, the Presiding Officer of the Interim ECOSOCC, H.E. Prof. Wangari Maathai, directed that there should be a composite elections for remaining Member States and regions that are ready for election and that would not have held elections by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008. These included Tanzania, South Africa, Uganda, Guinea-Conakry, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Congo Brazzaville, Mali, Ghana, Madagascar, Burundi, Nigeria and Zambia and Regional elections for South and West African regions. Arrangements were finalized accordingly and composite elections were held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 15-17 April 2008 under the auspices of Kenya National Electoral Authority.

5. The process was overseen by observers and monitors including Members of the African Diplomatic Corps in Nairobi, representatives of the AU Commission and Interim Standing Committee of ECOSOCC, Kenya Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Civil Society Organizations and the local and international media. The various observers have reported that the process was free, fair and transparent.

6. In this regard, the Commission would like to place on record its sincere appreciation of the work of the Interim Standing and Credentials Committee of ECOSOCC under the leadership of the Presiding Officer, H.E. Prof. Wangari Maathai and Hon. Saida Agrebi in this regard. Their devotion, commitment and hard work has enabled this process to be brought to a logical conclusion.

## **III. The Launch of the New Permanent General Assembly**

7. With the conclusion of the composite general elections, the Interim Standing Committee of ECOSOCC in tandem with the Commission had successfully concluded the assignment given by the Executive Council its Decision EX.CL/Dec.384. Hence, the Commission embarked on preparations to launch ECOSOCC. However, the date of 30 May 2008 set by Council for the launching of the Permanent General Assembly of ECOSOCC was difficult to meet because the Chairperson of the Commission who is expected to preside over the event would then be involved in the TICAD IV Summit in Yokohama, Japan, at the same time. Efforts were made to shift the date to the 1<sup>st</sup> week of June but the proposal encountered similar difficulties because of the Sullivan Summit, which would be taking place in Arusha, Tanzania, from 2-6 June 2008.

8. Since the processes for the preparation of this Council and Summit meetings began effectively in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of June 2008, the Commission's view is that it would be best to launch this important organ soon after the Summit. Consequently, the Chair

of the Commission is consulting closely with the Chair of the Union on the appropriate dates hopefully in July 2008.

9. It is necessary to note that the decision of the Executive Council had underlined the need for the new Permanent Assembly to hold by-elections in remaining states after the launching process as soon as its Credentials Committee has vetted the candidates as having the necessary qualifications for elections as prescribed by the ECOSOCC Statutes. The reasoning was that if every country had to have elections before the organ could be launched, the inauguration would be delayed indefinitely. Even so, the process of advertisement and scrutinization of candidates continue apace and in view of the current situation, it is reasonable to assume that these elections would be completed by December 2008.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

10. As we embark on plans for the inauguration of the new Permanent Assembly, the Commission has taken on board the recommendations of the Audit Panel of the Union on how to strengthen and consolidate ECOSOCC as an organ of the Union. These recommendations were all approved by the 11<sup>th</sup> Extra-Ordinary Session of the Executive Council at its meeting in Arusha, Tanzania, from 6-7 May 2008. The Commission had previously endorsed the bulk of the recommendations prior to that meeting. Since there is a unanimity of view and purpose on the strengthening and consolidation of this organ as recommended, the Commission solicits the kind support of Council to facilitate the implementation process. It is also the expectation of the Commission and the Union, at large, that the new leadership of ECOSOCC that would be elected during the launching process would be a set of committed and dedicated Pan-Africanists that would work in tandem with other organs of the Union to accelerate the process of peace, stability and rapid development of the continent in the spirit of the Constitutive Act of the Union that stresses the need for effective partnership between governments and all segments of society, including in particular, the civil society. The Commission calls for the support of all Member States to facilitate the launching of ECOSOCC and its effective performance thereafter.

2008

# Report on elections and preparations for launching the permanent assembly of the economic, Social and cultural council (ECOSOCC) of the African Union

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