

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

P. O. Box 3243

Telephone: 5517 700

Fax: 5517844

Website: www.au.int

SC16112

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
Twenty-Eighth Ordinary Session
23 - 28 January 2016
Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA

EX.CL/940(XXVIII)
Original: English

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

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

1. Council will recall that in the preceding report we underlined the need for institution building and consolidation as the first overriding priority of the 2nd ECOSOCC General Assembly. Accordingly, our main concern immediately after its inauguration was to put in place the structures and sub-organs of ECOSOCC that will drive the execution of its program agenda and to ensure that they are working at peak effectiveness. Consequently, the ECOSOCC Assembly elected its Bureau, Standing and Credential Committee as functional arms of the Organ as prescribed by its Statutes. This was coupled with an Induction and Orientation in Cairo, Egypt from 27 February to 1st March 2015 to ensure that functionaries in these structures have an adequate grasp of their challenge and obligations as well as a cognitive map on how to cope effectively with duties and attendant obligations. Subsequently, the General Assembly adopted draft Rules of Procedure for consideration by the executive organs of the Union.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN ECOSOCC AGENDA: FROM INSTITUTION-BUILDING TO PROGRAM SETTING

2. This emphasis on institution-building was the result of two major considerations. First was the recent history of the 1st Permanent General Assembly of ECOSOCC and particularly that the 2nd Assembly came into being more than two years after the life of the 1st Assembly expired. Secondly, this lesson of history was enriched by the findings of the Audit Report on ECOSOCC that stressed the need for members of ECOSOCC to be fully conscious of their roles and responsibilities and for its political leadership to be guided by ethics of public responsibility.

3. Following this, in the period under review, ECOSOCC activities were marked by continuity and change. Continuity implied that the process of consolidation and renewal of ECOSOCC as a dynamic institution of the African Union continued apace. The feature of change was marked by a shift in center of gravity towards operational goals and program setting and implementation. The phase of continuity was marked by the constitution of clusters and elections of Clusters Chairpersons. Similarly, the draft rules of procedure of ECOSOCC was reviewed and adopted by the Specialized Technical Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs that met in Addis from 2-13 November 2015. The Rules will come before this Council and Assembly session and hopefully, will be ratified. Furthermore, Standing Committee, as the Executive Organ of ECOSOCC, has decided that the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly will be adapted for use by its various sub-organs until those sub-organs themselves develop their own Rules of Procedure.

4. In the meantime, the Standing Committee of ECOSOCC met in Nairobi, Kenya, from 11-14 August 2015 to develop the framework of activities required for implementing the program agenda set by the General Assembly of ECOSOCC in its 1st Ordinary session held in Cairo, Egypt from 27 February to 1st March 2015.

5. In the course of its meeting the Standing Committee identified four main priorities for attention amongst others. These included the continuation of election process to ensure effective representation of all member states of the AU as required by Council Decision EX.CL/Dec.869(XXVI) June 2015, the operationalization of Sectoral Clusters as key operational mechanism of ECOSOCC as embedded in Article 11 of the ECOSOCC Statutes, the building of ECOSOCC National Chapters and the active development of a people-centered focus in the framework of AU's international partnerships in accordance with the preamble and principles of the Constitutive Act of the Union.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

6. Decision EX.CL/Dec.869(XXVI) of the Executive Council had directed that ECOSOCC and the Commission to "continue with by-elections for the vacant positions in the ECOSOCC General Assembly to ensure the widest possible representation of Member States of the Union within ECOSOCC. The Credentials Committee of ECOSOCC that led this process met in Maseru, Lesotho, from 30 June - 2 July 2015 to establish the composite program for completing this assignment. It recognized the need to mobilize civil society organizations around this process and emulated the example of CIDO in the preceding period by drawing up a plan for sensitization mission across the continent. It also put in place a program for processing applications along with an election calendar to support this process. Unfortunately the Credentials Committee discovered that there were no funds allocated for this purpose in the 2015 program budget and thus adjusted its planning framework so that activities can commence immediately after the 2016 January Summit when there will be available budget provisions. The process will therefore, begin in earnest by February 2015 and is scheduled to be completed within the first nine months of the year.

7. Significantly also, the process of operationalization of the Sectoral Cluster Committees has begun in earnest. Article 11 of the ECOSOCC Statutes recognized the Sectoral Cluster Committees as key operational mechanisms of ECOSOCC that will relate the programs and policies of the African Union to those of African citizens across all walks of life. In spite of its seminal importance, neither the Interim ECOSOCC Assembly (2005-2008) or the 1st Permanent General Assembly (2008-2012) was able to activate or operationalize Sectoral Clusters. The 2nd General Assembly was cognizant of this deficit and took the initiative to correct it. It set up a framework for Cluster operations and the first three Clusters – Political Affairs, Peace and Security and Gender Cluster – were activated and operationalized in the second quarter of 2015. Others were scheduled to follow and intention of the Standing Committee was to fully operationalize all the Clusters by the end of December 2015. Unfortunately, this process was interrupted by the austerity program announced by the AU Commission that froze ECOSOCC funding and others derived from Members States contribution in response to a sudden emergency.

8. Third, it will be recalled that the sensitization and motivation campaign that culminated in the establishment of the 2nd General Assembly of ECOSOCC had highlighted the need for establishment and consolidation of National ECOSOCC

Chapters as a framework of accountability for elected members and as instrument for dissemination of information and mobilization of support for AU policies and programs. This was a focus of ECOSOCC in the period under consideration. The Organs of ECOSOCC begun work on defining appropriate guidelines for the establishment of National Chapters and formation of Interim National Chapters in Mauritius and Seychelles served as crucibles for testing the standards of the guidelines. The finalization of the guidelines and establishment of national ECOSOCC chapters will be a main focus of ECOSOCC work in the current year of 2016.

9. Fourth, the process of ensuring effective civil society participation across the frameworks of AU's international partnership was also entrenched. Within the framework of the Africa-EU partnership, the CSO continental and intercontinental framework under ECOSOCC leadership were activated and operationalized to provide inputs for the JAES process with emphasis on preparations for the comprehensive stakeholders platform, the Joint Annual Forum (JAF) and the Africa-EU Summit in Valetta, Malta in November 2015. Outside the frameworks of these specific occasions, ECOSOCC has taken steps to revitalize, in concert with non-state actors across regions of the world, the process of civil society engagement in AU's international partnerships. This process has faltered in recent times as increasing emphasis was placed on state to state relationships. In this context, under the leadership of the Presiding Officer, ECOSOCC has engaged in civil society actors in China, Turkey, India, etc with a view to ensuring that emphasis on civil society inclusions in the process are entrenched and the view of citizens outside government structures are fully incorporated within the framework of global development initiatives.

THE ROAD AHEAD

10. In the aftermath of this Summit, the twin axis of the nurture and consolidation of ECOSOCC Institutions will continue to be coupled with the effective execution of its concomitant program agenda.

11. Meanwhile, it is important to highlight a few critical issues that are necessary and sufficient conditions for success of the ECOSOCC agenda. First is the need for the Commission of the Union to improve on processes for coordination of the Inter-organ interactions and relationships. The Commission is the Secretariat of the Union and hosts the Union accounting officer. Thus its actions impact on the success of the activities of other Organs. The Commission needs to take this lesson to heart because several of its actions and steps taken so far do not reflect this awareness. For instance, the decision to impose austerity measures that froze ECOSOCC activities for the rest of the year was taken without pre-consultation with other Organs including ECOSOCC. Yet it had a devastating impact of ECOSOCC work program. A process of regular consultation within the family of Organs of the Union is required for the successful implementation of the wider Union agenda. ECOSOCC wishes to suggest that such a process be regularized to take place on schedule at least thrice a year with emergency sessions called when required as in the case of recent austerity measures imposed by the AU Commission.

12. In a similar vein, I wish once again to draw attention to ongoing processes for structural reform within the Union. I raised the issue in the last Summit. Yet the pattern of interaction has not changed. The AU is a family of Organs in which serious issues such as structural reform must be undertaken together. More so, Organs like ECOSOCC which has its Secretariat within the Commission must be in a position to reflect on issues pertaining to structural reform – financing, the processes, propositions and outcomes. In particular, decisions concerning CIDO including staff considerations must be discussed with and agreed with ECOSOCC as matters concerning its well-being. It is necessary that such significant or Union-wide issues should not be limited or reduced to a Commission affair. The Commission should not engage in paternalism in relation with other Organs.

13. Furthermore, there is the issue of funding and sustainability of ECOSOCC programs. This has bearing on the preceding points. Beyond this, is that ECOSOCC has now come into its own as a fully operational Organ. This implies that the scope for funding its program support must be enlarged to enable it to fulfill its wider operational responsibilities.

CONCLUSION AND APPRECIATION

14. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the work of our Secretariat in the Citizens and Diaspora Organizations Directorate (CIDO) under its current leadership for the excellent work it has done since the inception of the 2nd ECOSOCC General Assembly. The dedication, hardwork and aptitude of the Secretariat has been well appreciated by the Bureau, Standing and Credentials Committee and the General Assembly of ECOSOCC.

AFRICAN UNION UNION AFRICAINE

African Union Common Repository

<http://archives.au.int>

Organs

Council of Ministers & Executive Council Collection

2016

Report of the Economic, Social And Cultural Council of the African Union (ECOSOCC

African Union

African Union

<http://archives.au.int/handle/123456789/4927>

Downloaded from African Union Common Repository