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

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1. ECOSOCC is an organ of AU that was established under the provisions of articles 5 and 22 of the AU Constitutive Act. Its purpose is to serve as an advisory organ to the AU, composed of civil society organisations (CSOs). The period 2017/18 was undoubtedly full of activity for the organ. Over the period, ECOSOCC in line with its mandate was actively involved in several activities based on the executive council decisions done in 2018. This report will focus on the mainstream activities that the organ was engaged in during the period. These includes: sectoral clusters programmatic interventions; statutory meetings; participation in AU processes and programs; ECOSOCC reforms as well as the ECOSOCC relocation plan. In this report, a concise highlight of the implementation of these various aspects is presented.

2.0 TECHNICAL PROGRAMMATIC INTERVENTIONS

2. The various Sectoral cluster committees of the organ were engaged in various programmatic interventions during the year in line with the organ's mandate. It is important to highlight that ECOSOCC main bodies include: the General Assembly, 10 Sectoral Cluster Committees, Standing Committee, and the Credentials Committee. Sections 2.1 through 2.5 highlights the various activities in which the ECOSOCC was engaged in during the year as executed by the various cluster committees of the organ.

2.1 Programmatic Interventions by Sectoral Cluster Committees

3. The Executive Council Decision EX.CL/Dec.869 (XXVI) directed that ECOSOCC play a key role in popularizing Agenda 2063 and all important AU policy frameworks. The ten sectoral cluster committees thus being the technical arm of the organ are not only required to provide technical input in the implementation of AU policy frameworks, but must also ensure their popularization.

4. In line with this, the cluster committees were engaged in rigorous efforts to popularize and raise awareness on Agenda 2063 and the AU 2018 theme of the year; winning the fight against corruption; a sustainable path to Africa's transformation. The cluster committees held consultations on the project 2018 the Africa year of anti-corruption, and organized several multi-stakeholders dialogues in addition to building strong partnerships to facilitate synergy in the fight against corruption. In the celebration of Africa Day 2018, they highly popularized the theme of the year.

5. Interactive meetings were also held by the cluster committees to formulate opinions and provide input into other various AU policies and programmes including:

On Infrastructure and Energy Cluster Committee (IECC)

6. The first ECOSOCC Pan-African Youth Forum on Internet Governance (PAYFIG) was held on 11th August 2018 at Hennessy Park Hotel, Ebene, Mauritius. ECOSOCC has a mission to trickle down AU policies to the wider African populace. The Infrastructure & Energy Cluster Committee (IECC) of ECOSOCC comprises of a number of portfolios, viz, Infrastructure, Energy, Transport, Tourism and ICT. Given the fact that Africa boasts the highest population of young persons in the world, ECOSOCC deemed it more than timely to organize an event around youth and internet governance on the occasion of the International Youth Day 2018.

7. The conception of the Pan-African Youth Forum (PAYF) series is a bold step to show the resolve of ECOSOCC in addressing societal issues and toil in bringing about positive change on the continent. ECOSOCC looks forward to make PAYF an annual feature, to coincide with the Africa Youth Day (1st November) in the future; each year dealing with contemporary issues or related to the AU Theme of the Year.

8. Secondly, the Infrastructure and Energy Cluster Committee (IECC) also in its endeavour to promote the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), one of the flagship projects under the Agenda 2063, organized the first-ever ECOSOCC Symposium on African Air Transport and Tourism which was held in Casablanca, Morocco from 27-28 September 2018. The symposium was strategic in raising awareness on the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) and Tourism in Africa, it unveiled a new spectrum for knowledge for many of the participants and drew resource persons from top organizations across the world. The effect was so remarkable that Moroccan authorities held talks with ECOSOCC on SAATM and assured that it will expedite steps to ratify SAATM as promptly as possible. It was also agreed that ECOSOCC will set up a permanent working group to work on Air Transport and Tourism Integration of the African Continent

On Peace and Security Cluster Committee

9. The Peace and Security Cluster in its effort to ensure Civil Society takes leadership and ownership of its role in the practical implementation of the AU Master Road Map for Silencing the Gun by 2020 organized two important technical consultative meeting; roundtable on CSOs perspective on countering violent extremism, terrorism and the illicit proliferation of arms in Africa and the Livingstone Formula on the involvement of CSOs in the promotion of peace, security and the stability of Africa with a focus on Silencing the Gun in Africa by 2020 from 22 – 24 May 2018 at La Falaise Hotel in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

10. The aim of the Roundtable was to create a platform for expert discussion on the issue of countering violent extremism, terrorism and the illicit proliferation of arms in Africa and make recommendations to regional and continental bodies to revise relevant chapters of these conventions as necessary, with particular regard to the integration of anti-terrorism and anti- extremism provisions.

On Social Affairs and Health Cluster Committee

11. The Social Affairs and Health Cluster of AU-ECOSOCC held a consultative meeting on 20 July 2018 in Chelsea Hotel, Abuja, Nigeria, to review and assess the AU Social Policy Framework as part of its mandate under Article 7 and 11 of the ECOSOCC Statutes approved by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union. The meeting was also designed to establish a roadmap that would align the framework with current needs and agenda of the AU, particularly Agenda 2063 and ongoing AU Reform Initiative and to enable the African Union and its Member States to adapt and respond appropriately to the needs and requirements of its broad population in the context of the demands of the 21 century. The meeting identified the shortfalls in the Social Policy Framework document which to a very large extent has affected its practical implementation in the present contemporary and contextual realities. The meeting however, concluded with series of recommendations on how to bridge the gap thereby provides sufficient basis for ECOSOCC as an advisory organ of the Union to provide an advisory opinion to the AU policy organ on the need to update and revise the existing AU Social Policy Framework and to advice on its content to accommodate current trends.

On Trade and Industry Cluster Committee

12. The Trade and Industry Cluster Committee of ECOSOCC in collaboration with the Trade and Industry Department of the African Union Commission held a consultative workshop on the Continental Free Trade Area for private sector and civil society which took place in Dakar Senegal from 5-9 November, 2018. One of the purpose of the consultative workshop was to have a multi stakeholder approach in the development of an advocacy plans and programmes for fast tracking the ratification of ACFTA by various Member States Parliaments. The consultative workshop also provided a platform for non-state actors to take leadership and ownership in driving the ACFTA agenda to its realization. The committee also made a commitments in its technical working committee meeting held in Cairo in the month of October to leverage on its various national chapters to popularize the agreement and further engage national stakeholders especially those that have not yet signed the agreement to take action on it. This engagement is ongoing with the various ECOSOCC national chapters at member states level.

On Human Resource Science and Technology

13. The HRST Cluster Committee of ECOSOCC has been playing its role in various AU programmes and processes in driving the youth, education and science and technology priorities on Agenda 2063. It is recognized that this cluster is very fundamental in achieving Africa transformation and therefore has been fully engaged in various continental programmes and processes. One outstanding output in 2018 is the roadmap developed by the cluster committee for non-state actors to engage relevant players through its various national chapters on the 10-year Science Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA2024) and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25). These strategy are part of the long term people centered AU Agenda 2063 which is underpinned by Education, Science, Technology and Innovation as a multi-function tools and enablers for achieving the AU continental goals. This roadmap has provided non state actors the opportunity to engage with the relevant line ministries in various member states to advocate for it full implementation.

On Rural Economy and Agriculture Cluster Committee

14. Civil Society Organizations members in the Rural Economy and Agriculture Cluster Committee participated in the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) at the UN Headquarters in New York. Its theme was “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies.” The Forum reviewed progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with a focus on resilient societies but also had over 100 side events held of which the AU ECOSOCC through the Rural Economy and Agriculture Cluster also organized two side events . The organ partnered with some key actors such as the African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO), Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights, NGO Major Group for Africa at the United Nations, the Uganda National NGO Forum and the Government of Zambia in the organization of the two side events: African Union Agenda 2063 and SDGs: The Blue and Green Economy Nexus in Africa and creating a Green Economy in Africa: Lessons and Opportunities for the Future. In both side events, critical issues were raised which provided an interactive platform for constructive engagement with the organ.

15. It is imperative to note that the participation and side events were quite successful and it is clear that ECOSOCC through its various clusters have the potential to play a more meaningful role in global policy spaces so that it can learn from the global engagements. It also provided a golden opportunity for the organ to share its work at the global arena.

16. In a nutshell, the collaboration with Member States and other non-state actors across Africa indeed has enhanced the work of AU ECOSOCC.

On Political Affairs Cluster Committee

17. The Political Affairs Cluster Committee of the AU – ECOSOCC as the hub for political and human rights issues convened a number of activities contributing to the practical implementation of Agenda 2063 with particular focus in seeing Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner. The cluster held a Capacity-building workshop for member of its cluster from 25 -27 April 2018 at the African Union Headquarters, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia with the aim of building the capacity of the cluster focal point to engage on the issues of human rights and political affairs in the continent from the civil society angle.

18. The Cluster Committee also participated in the 38th and 39th session of the UN Human Rights Council recognizing the importance of effective participation in the work of the United Nations bodies related to African issues. The participation also provided an opportunity for the organ to dialogue with other key stakeholders such as **African Group (AFRICAN PERMANENT DELEGATIONS TO THE UN GENEVA)** to discuss issues on African human rights concerns. During these sessions, the organ also held two side events on **Migration and African Human Rights** and African Human Rights concerns.

19. It is imperative to indicate that the participation of ECOSOCC was a huge success as it raised the profile of ECOSOCC as a civil society organ of the AU and enhanced an understanding on its role within the framework of the Africa Union. The side event also provided a better platform to sensitize a wide range of stakeholders on the AU Agenda 2063 and also presented an Advisory Opinion on Migration and Human Rights which was developed by ECOSOCC as a way to provide policy guidance on the migration situation in the continent.

20. The cluster also developed an advisory opinion proving policy guidance to the union on how the issue of migration can be address from a human right based approach.

On Cross Cutting Cluster Committee

21. The Cross-Cutting Cluster Committee of ECOSOCC has a mandate to focus on all other cross-cutting issues that are not covered in the other nine clusters such as HIV/AIDS, international cooperation, coordination with other institutions and organs of the Union, etc. In 2018 the cross cutting cluster contributed immensely in the various stakeholders engagement on international cooperation creating a congenial partnership environment for a win-win outcome. Specifically, the cluster committee held a technical consultative workshop soliciting input from civil society organizations to contribute to an effective and efficient partnership interactive platform. ECOSOCC has represented the voice of Africa

Citizenry in all AU common position on partnerships in order to maximize Africa's benefits from partnerships and deepening of transformative benefits from partnerships in the best interest of the Africa people. The cluster Committee also contributed to the Preparation of the AU Policy Framework on Partnership for purposes of Africa ownership and more importantly provided technical inputs on the partnership interactive platform.

On Economic Affairs Cluster Committee

22. The Economic Affairs cluster is mandated by the ECCOSOC statutes to integrate development in monetary terms but more importantly to look at the financials affairs within the private and informal sector for economic development. In 2018 the Economic Affairs cluster committee also provided a tangible input in the AU program and processes to the Economics department within the Africa Union Commission through the joint technical consultative meeting which led to the submission of a position paper on the effect of illicit financial flow. The cluster also undertook series of awareness raising activities through the various ECOSOCC national chapter on the AU 2018 theme of the year focusing on the effect of corruption in economic development in the continent.

On Women and Gender Cluster Committee

23. The Women and Gender Cluster Committee also played a pivotal role in the review of the AU Gender Policy Framework through a consultative process in which civil society input was considered in the review process. The cluster also held a technical consultative workshop in Cairo Egypt with a focus on mainstreaming gender issues into work of ECOSOCC through the various technical Sectoral cluster committees and also in national chapters programming. The cluster also developed an advocacy plan for national chapters to engage various stakeholders at member states level on achieving the gender parity decision.

Key Achievements

- ❖ African civil society's contributions to the monitoring and tracking of SDGs and AU Agenda 2063 goals was widely publicized and highlighted.
- ❖ There has been of the anticorruption efforts in Africa and a position paper was developed and disseminated to all MS.
- ❖ Cooperation and joint actions have also been developed with similar and or interested institutions on issues relating to anticorruption.
- ❖ Advisory opinions on migration and the role of CSO in silencing gun was produce and submitted

2.2 Statutory Meetings

24. These are mandatory meetings that are required to be held by the three key committees in the organ including the Standing Committee, Credential Committee, and the General Assembly. In line with its objective (to consider and recommend actions and propose policies in the functional areas under their respective technical Committees), the Standing Committee met and looked into the organ's priority activities for the year 2018. The Credential Committee also met (in line with its objective of examining the credential of ECOSOCC members) and reviewed the process for the ECOSOCC elections.

25. Article 5 (5) of the ECOSOCC Statute clearly articulates that the General Assembly of ECOSOCC shall have a mandate of 4 years and may be re-elected only once. The Second Permanent General Assembly which started in December, 2014, lifespan comes to an end in December, 2018. This led to the meeting of 3rd Permanent General Assembly (GA) of ECOSOCC which took place from the 10-12 December, 2018 in Nairobi Kenya following the composite elections of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) held on 8 December 2018, which culminated by the election of 72 new Civil Society organizations members of the 3rd Permanent General Assembly.

26. Further to the above, Section IV Rule 20 of the ECOSOCC Rules of Procedures stipulated that immediately after the election of members of the General Assembly, the General Assembly shall elect from its members, the Bureau consisting of the Presiding Officer and five deputy officers representing the five regions of the union including the African Diaspora. In view of the above, the election of the Bureau of the 3rd Permanent General Assembly was held and completed in Nairobi Kenya during the above stated dates and five officers including the Presiding Officer and 4 deputies were duly elected as members of the ECOSOCC Bureau, as follows:

- Presiding Officer - Mr. Abozer Elmana Elligai - (Sudan-East).
- Deputy Presiding Officer– Mme Djibrine Amakher (Chad-Central).
- Deputy Presiding Officer– Mr. Khalid Boudali (Morocco-North).
- Deputy Presiding Officer– Mr. Patson Malisa - (South Africa-South).
- Deputy Presiding Officer– Mr. Francis Akpa (Togo-West).

27. The newly elected Presiding Officer is the Vice-president and co-founder of a Sudanese organization, Maarij Foundation for Peace and Development (MFPD). He is took over from Mr. Richard Ssewakiryanga from the Uganda National NGO Forum who has served as Presiding Officer of ECOSOCC for one term of two years and declined to seek a second mandate.

Key Achievements

- ❖ A successful outcome of the ECOSOCC Composite elections which culminated by the election of 72 new Civil Society organizations members of the 3rd Permanent General Assembly.
- ❖ Successful outcome of the elections of the Bureau of ECOSOCC in which four out of five positions were based on regional consensus without determine the winner through an election process.
- ❖ A consolidated work programme for the year 2019 was developed and a calendar of events was prepared.
- ❖ There has been enhanced visibility of ECOSOCC elections in all the member states of the union.

2.3 Participation in AU Processes and Programs

28. ECOSOCC has been participating in various election observation missions in a bid to ensure free and fair elections. This is in furtherance of the efforts by AU to achieve aspiration 3 of Agenda 2063 – An Africa of Good Governance, Democracy, Respect for Human Rights, Justice and the Rule of Law. The involvement of ECOSOCC in the election observation missions is in the spirit of ensuring that Africa will eventually be a continent that conducts free, fair and credible elections characterized by multi-party system; level playing field in the political competitive process; education of the electorate to make informed choices; and a promoted Pan Africanism, equality, diversity, excellence and solidarity.

29. ECOSOCC has also been participating in various AU flagship projects. Involvement of ECOSOCC in these projects is to ensure civil societies involvement in development programmes.

Pre-Summit

30. The Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) held its pre-summit meeting in Cairo, Egypt from the 29th to 30th October 2018. As is customary, ECOSOCC holds this meeting in the build-up to the following year's Heads of States' Summit to discuss how Civil Society organizations can play a part in the African Union theme of the upcoming year. The theme for 2019 is: *Year of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons in Africa: towards durable solutions to forced displacement*. With forced displacement being something that has plagued the continent for decades, the continent finally took its first stand against the issue in 2009 with the adoption of the Kampala Convention dubbed *the*

Convention for protection and assistance for internally displaced persons in Africa. Following that convention, the AU decided that 2019 would be the year to battle forced displacement.

31. The overall objective of this pre-summit was to reflect on the socio-economic and political development and challenges of the continent with particular focus on the 2019 theme of the year. This led to a communique developed by various civil society organization under the leadership of ECOSOCC. This communique has been translated into the various AU languages and sent to various stakeholders in the continent including government of member states

Key Achievements

- ❖ There was popularization of EAP within CSOs and involvement of CSOs on the roll out of roadmap for the 4 volume.
- ❖ Successful elections were conducted in various member states and CSO's through ECOSOCC played a pivotal role in the process
- ❖ A communique on the role of CSO in the implementation of the AU 2019 Theme of the year was developed and disseminated to various stakeholders including government of member states

2.4 ECOSOCC Reforms

32. ECOSOCC reform process is anchored on the AU institutional reform through Executive Council Decision, Assembly/AU/Dec.635 (XXVIII). In this regard, a consultant was recruited to undertake an empirical study on the role of civil society to influence and inform policy making processes in Africa.

33. Moreover, it is important to highlight that the Permanent Representative Council (PRC) of the African Union through the Executive Council Decision EX.CL/Dec.849 (XXV) in 2014, directed the organ to undertake an in-depth study on its functioning since its inception and provide appropriate recommendations in line with AU's current reforms on ways and means to revamp the operations of the organ that would help to deliver on its advisory role. The follow up activity on the first quarter approved ECOSOCC in-depth study (inception, country field visit and validation meeting) took place in December 2018.

34. There has been institutionalization of the Executive Council decisions with regard to ECOSOCC systems and structures. For instance, ECOSOCC Bureau members were involved in missions launching of ECOSOCC national chapters within their respective regions. The organ thus largely stretched their efforts in fostering and nurturing of the relationship between national government, civil society at large, and national chapters for execution of EX.XL/890(XXVII).

Key Achievements

- ❖ ECOSOCC has managed to secure the goodwill of governments of member states towards the successful operations of national chapters, as well as the support of societies at large in the mandate of national chapters' execution.
- ❖ There has been increased visibility of the work of ECOSOCC.
- ❖ Development of evidence based information that informs policy decision.
- ❖ Increased expertise database for ECOSOCC to efficiently undertake its advisory role.

2.5 ECOSOCC Relocation Plan Updates

35. Following the AU Assembly Decision - **Assembly/AU/Dec.5914 (XXVI)** that directed the African Union Commission to work together with Zambian government to define the legal, structural and financial implications of the relocation of its secretariat to Lusaka, Zambia, significant progress was made regarding the plans.

36. During the year 2017/18, critical steps were made regarding the relocation plans. First was the signing of agreements between AU and the government of Zambia. Moreover, the priority positions for the secretariat have been advertised and recruitment is ongoing. These include: Head of Secretariat, Principal Coordinator, Programme Officer, and the Desk Officer. The commission is working with Zambian government to facilitate a successful transition in the 1st quarter of 2019.

Key Achievements

- ❖ A comprehensive report of the evaluation mission in the Republic of Zambia was assessed by PRC and submitted to the AU ordinary Summit.
- ❖ Applications for the priority positions of the secretariat have been received and recruitment is ongoing with an expectation to be finalized by first quarter in 2019.

3.0 CHALLENGES

37. The major challenges experienced include:

3.1. Inadequate female gender representation in ECOSOCC

38. The number of female representatives is still remains very limited in the ECOSOCC Leadership structure. This has been a major hindrance to the fulfillment of the gender equality policy of the AU.

3.2. No institutionalized framework or mechanism for developing and submitting advisory opinion

4.0 CONCLUSION

39. The year 2017/18 was a very busy period for ECOSOCC which marked the accomplishment of several goals for the organ despite the unique challenges faced. The various achievements made during the year are likely to contribute greatly to the organ's effectiveness and efficiency in the coming year.

40. The outgoing 2nd General Assembly leaves a good framework in set for the incoming 3rd General Assembly that was elected in December, to advance ongoing programmes in an effective and efficient manner. ECOSOCC appreciates and acknowledges the good work of the outgoing GA and looks forward to a 3rd GA that will further the good work started and enhance it even more, to the effective and efficient fulfillment of the organ's mandate.

41. The organ in its entirety expresses its appreciation to the PRC, Office of Chairperson of the Commission for the relentless devotion in supporting the organ, which largely contributed to the organ's achievements for the year.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ The organ recommends that structures be put in place to increase female representation in the 3rd ECOSOCC GA in order to ensure the fulfillment of AU's policy on gender equality.
- ❖ ECOSOCC further recommends that the organ develop a framework or mechanism for the development and submission of advisory opinion.

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