



PRESS RELEASE

AU ECOSOCC AND UN ECOSOC HOLD PARTNERSHIP DISCUSSIONS

New York, 6 December 2016 – A delegation from the African Union led by the Presiding Officer of the Economic Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), Mr. Joseph Chilengi, has held partnership discussions with the President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Ambassador Frederic M.M. Shava, at the UN Headquarters in New York.

The AU delegation, also including Ambassador Lazarous Kapambwe, Economic Advisor to the Chairperson of the AU Commission, informed Ambassador Shava of the mandate entrusted by the policy organs of the AU on ECOSOCC to act as the coordinator of civil society participation in the AU by developing a harmonized mechanism for accrediting civil society actors wishing to do business with the AU. At present the African Union does not operate a centralized entry point for CSO engagement with AU organs and specialized agencies, similar to the role played UN ECOSOC for CSO participation with UN agencies. The AU delegation was therefore undertaking a fact-finding mission to understand the mechanisms and systems by which the UN ECOSOC manages and stewards CSO participation on behalf of the UN. As part of the mission the delegation paid a courtesy call on Ambassador Shava to express appreciation for the facilities and support accorded to the team by the UN ECOSOC Secretariat.

The Presiding Officer briefed Ambassador Shava on the technical consultations that the AU delegation had accomplished with the UN ECOSOC Secretariat and congratulated him on the focus of his presidency – sustainable industrialization and innovation – assuring the UN ECOSOC President of the support of African civil society and AU ECOSOCC.

Mr. Chilengi took the opportunity to brief Ambassador Shava on the composition, structure, mandate and working methods of the AU ECOSOCC, as well as the conditions informing the Decision of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government to direct ECOSOC to develop an institutional accreditation mechanism for CSOs wishing to engage the AU.

The Presiding Officer reiterated the desire, expressed initially in the AU delegation's technical meeting with the UN ECOSOC Secretariat, for both bodies to initiate an annual engagement mechanism to reinforce each other's programs. He also extended an invitation to Ambassador Shava to the next General Assembly of AU ECOSOCC to offer a message of solidarity and counsel to his AU counterparts.

Ambassador Shava, who is also the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zimbabwe to the United Nations, took the opportunity to formally welcome the AU delegation and expressed his support for continuing engagement between the two bodies.

The ECOSOCC President highlighted the fact that commonalities exist between the UN ECOSOCC and its AU counterpart, even if their constitutive structures are different. He

reiterated the important role that the UN ECOSOC's Committee on NGOs plays in managing, vetting and stewarding the UN relationship with civil society. Ambassador Shava noted the high level of interest from CSOs around the world in securing observer status through UN ECOSOC and encouraged AU ECOSOCC to compare notes to learn best practices, ensuring that this exchange of ideas is undertaken in recognition of the differences and similarities of the two bodies.

He also called on an observer role for AU ECOSOCC under the auspices of the AU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN in order to strengthen cooperation.

Ambassador Shava assured the AU delegation of the support of the UN ECOSOC and reiterated his preparedness and that of the UN ECOSOC Secretariat to assist and support the AU delegation in carrying out its implementation of the Assembly decision to develop a CSO accreditation mechanism for the African Union.

He further thanked Mr. Chilengi for his invitation to the ECOSOCC General Assembly and indicated his office will explore the possibility of his participation.

Ambassador Shava highlighted the fact that the theme of his presidency - sustainable industrialization and innovation - are themes that affected all African countries, and aligned with the AU's own industrialization agenda as well. He therefore expressed a hope for increased synergies between the AU and UN developmental agendas, particularly as they related to industrialization and innovation.

The UN ECOSOC President, for his part, extended an invitation to AU ECOSOCC to participate in upcoming UN meetings on industrialization and agricultural mechanization; and assured the delegation of continued interaction and communication in the pursuit of closer cooperation.

For more information, please contact:

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