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**EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**  
**Twelfth Ordinary Session**  
**25 – 29 January 2008**  
**Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA**

**EX.CL/377 (XII)**

**REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS INTO THE  
POST-INTERIM ECOSOCC ASSEMBLY**

**REPORT ON THE PREPARATION AND CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS INTO THE  
PERMANENT ASSEMBLY OF THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL  
COUNCIL OF THE AFRICAN UNION (ECOSOCC) (FOR THE PRC  
AND THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL)**

Council will recall its Decision EX.CL/Dec 338(X) at the 10th Ordinary Session of January 2007 held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to extend the mandate of the Interim ECOSOCC to 31st December 2007. The Decision requested the Standing Committee to take necessary measures to ensure that the process of election into the post-interim ECOSOCC Assembly is completed by 31 December 2007. It also requested the Commission to take appropriate measures to support this process in accordance with the rules and regulations of the African Union and to submit a report to the next Ordinary Session of the Executive Council.

**The Cairo Meeting: Developing a Roadmap for the Election Agenda**

Immediately after the session of Council, the Interim Presiding Officer of ECOSOCC, Professor Wangari Maathai, convened a meeting of the Interim Standing Committee in Cairo, Egypt from 24-26 February 2007 to consider the implications and challenges inherent in the Council Decision and establish a roadmap that would enable the Interim Standing Committee to fulfill its mandate within the timeframe defined by Council.

In this context, the Cairo meeting examined the processes of consultation, mobilization and sensitization that had been carried out by members of the Bureau of ECOSOCC and the wider Interim Assembly to determine whether it could serve as a basis for legitimate elections. After serious examination of ongoing processes, the Standing Committee decided otherwise. The majority of the Standing Committee recognized that while some commendable efforts had been made in this regard, the consultations were often marked by irregularities including purported, inadvertent or deliberate exclusion of significant segments of civil society and had limited scope, depth and credibility.

**The Work of the Credentials Committee**

Consequently, the Standing Committee opted for a media/publicity approach towards elections that would be inclusive, open and transparent. This approach involved the creation of election templates by the Work programme and Credentials Committee of the Interim Assembly, publications of this template on the internet, national, regional and continental and other media outreaches inviting all eligible candidates to apply for elections. Subsequently, the Credentials Committee will vet applications and short list the candidates approved for elections. It would then submit the report to the Standing Committee for consideration and/or adoption. If the Standing Committee upholds the report and result, it would then become the basis for elections. However, an appeals process was also included within this programme. The

Credentials Committee would notify candidates about the status of their application, giving them the option to appeal or provide new information that would support their eligibility claims. Candidates who have not provided all necessary information would be given the option to supply them and listed meanwhile as provisional candidates pending a deadline after which their provisional status would no longer hold.

The process was carried out thoroughly and diligently. The Committee reviewed all applications using the verification template within the framework of the eligibility criteria outlined by the ECOSOCC Statutes. In doing this, it sought to reconcile the need to adhere strictly to the provisions of the Statute and the requirements contained in Article 6 of the Statutes with meeting the overall objectives of ECOSOCC and sought advice of the Office of the Legal Counsel on the application of these rules.

Overall, a total of about two hundred and thirty seven applications from 44 countries were received and examined at two successive meetings in Accra, Ghana and Yaounde, Cameroon in June and September 2007 respectively. Details of the outcomes were presented to the 2nd meeting of the Standing Committee held in Mount Febe Hotel, Yaounde, Cameroon from 5-6 September 2007 by the Chairperson of the Credentials Committee, Hon. Saida Agrebi. Overall, 20 countries were adjudged ready for elections at that time, ten other were provisionally ready and twenty three not yet ready. In addition, arrangements were concluded to hold the continental elections and two regional elections.

### **The Review and Evaluation Process in Yaounde**

The Standing Committee evaluated the methods, procedures and outcomes of the work of the Credentials Committee and praised it for its exemplary work. It also decided unanimously to adopt it as a basis for subsequent elections. It extended the deadlines for application for countries that were adjudged not ready or provisionally ready for elections, as appropriate. It also carried out internal consultations and developed a work programme, including a timetable and calendar for elections in a manner that would enable it to complete its mandate by December 10, 2007. It further authorized the appeals process and directed the Credentials Committee to work with the Secretariat to fix dates for elections as new countries, regions etc become ready for elections. In addition, it established a procedure for conduct of elections based on guidelines to be developed by the Office of the Legal Counsel of the AU and a procedure for election observation and monitoring to guarantee a free and fair process and to assess progress and development of the process.

### **The Role of the Secretariat**

As part of this process, the Secretariat in the Commission was directed to liaise with Embassies and Governments of Member States to designate competent authorities to supervise the election and to work with the Commission and the Standing Committee to support and provide enabling environments for the holding of elections. In each and every case, the Standing Committee also agreed to associate the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in each Member State with the election process.

The Secretariat has been very faithful in its execution of this assignment. As the process evolved, it has conveyed details of decisions and implementation processes to various states through their Embassies in Addis Ababa and provided updates on progress and developments, maintaining a steady flow of information and cross-communication between ECOSOCC as an organ and Member States of the Union.

### **The Onset of Elections**

Subsequently, the process commenced with the Continental elections held in Addis Ababa, on 30 October 2007. The event, presided over the Prof. Wangari Maathai, was well attended by Members of the PRC, representatives of the Diplomatic Corps, Members of the Standing Committee, the Secretariat and the representative of the Chairperson of the Commission, Commissioner Rosebud Kurwijila. All participated actively in the proceedings which was open, free and fair. The results were accepted by both winners and losers. Thereafter elections were held in 6 states namely, Sudan, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Cameroon, Kenya. Eastern regional elections were also held in Kenya on 8 December 2007.

### **Appraisal**

So far, the elections have been conducted with fairness, substance and dignity. The quality of victors has been very strong. Credible and important new members of the ECOSOCC Assembly have emerged in different parts of the continent as a mark of the legitimacy, inclusivity and the dynamic nature of the process. For example, the winners at the Continental level included the Pan-African Lawyers Union (PALU), the Organization of African Trade Union (OATUU), Pan-African Employers Federation, and prominent women's group such as FEMNET, PAWO and FAS. At the national level, organizations such as the Maendeleo Ya Wana Wake Organization in Kenya, ANSEDI in Algeria, the Tunisian Mothers Association in Tunisia have also emerged. On current form also, the principle of gender balance has been easily attained through the voting process. Female representatives have won majority of the elections in Algeria, Tunisia, Kenya and the Eastern regional elections.

The elections have also been carried out with dignity, with the African Civil Society Community providing examples in civility and decorum. The eligibility criteria were very stringent and several prominent members of the current Assembly including the Standing Committee and members of the Bureau were disqualified. Yet, most accepted the results in good faith and continued to provide diligent and committed oversight and supervision of the process. In his opening address to the Continental election, Prof. Alpha Oumar Konare, the Chairperson of the Commission remarked upon and commended this trend.

Invariably, there have been a few bad losers but this also gives viability and strength to the process since it implies that the African Civil Society Community is not set apart from the general mainstream of the continent and humanity in which the privilege of representation and power is keenly fought with results often difficult for losers to bear. Overall however, the trend has been congenial, open, competitive and well intentioned.

Credit for this must go to the Credentials Committee and its leadership, Hon Saida Agrebi, which with the support of the Secretariat in the Commission performed most creditably as well as the Standing Committee under the leadership of Prof. Wangari Maathai. Credit must also be given to Member States and, particularly to the Embassies of various States in Addis Ababa that have provided strong support. The PRC, especially the Chairperson Ambassador Aggrey of Ghana were also closely associated with the process. Even so, certain problems demand attention particularly as they relate to the way forward.

### **The Way Forward**

The main problem is the limited time space available for completion of the exercise. At its meeting in Yaounde, the Interim Standing Committee set itself a target for completing elections by 10 December 2007 and established a vigorous calendar and work programme to support this programme.

In reality, the process has proved to be more involved and more challenging. The task of conducting elections in 53 sovereign states and at regional and continental levels is more intricate than expected. It involves complex negotiations with states to agree on dates and venues. It also requires designation of competent national authorities and agreement with them on timeframes and schedules. Communication between the Commission and Embassies in Addis Ababa and between both and the various governments have proved to be very difficult leading to delays in effective implementation of the calendar.

In addition, the timelines for states in which candidates were only provisionally ready or in which there were no candidates at all have also impacted on the established calendar.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Lessons have been learnt and the process have benefited from experience leading to rapid and faster arrangements and adaptation of the work programme. However, it is clear that elections cannot be completed within the time frame set by Council Decision, though the process is now on automatic gear.

Finally, the Commission estimates firmly that about two and a half months will be required to complete the process. It will be difficult to guarantee that all states will have completed the process just as it will be difficult to ensure that all states participate in Summits or AU programmes. But the great majority can be guaranteed within that time frame so that the ECOSOCC process can assume the necessary gravity and momentum. The Permanent ECOSOCC Assembly can then be launched in April 2008.

In conclusion, it is the firm conviction of the Commission that the foundation for an active, vibrant and sound post-interim ECOSOCC Assembly has been laid, if the process is given the leeway for completion. The Commission therefore, requests the final extension of the tenure of the Interim ECOSOCC for a term of two and half months till March 15, 2008 to pave the way for the launching of the Permanent Assembly of ECOSOCC in April 2008.