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## PAN AFRICAN CULTURAL CONGRESS AIMS TO PLACE CULTURE AT THE CENTER OF DEVELOPMENT



### Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 28 August 2012-

The third Pan African Cultural Congress (PACC 3) which aims to make sure culture is given greater consideration in development planning and policies has started at the African Union Commission (AUC) in Addis Ababa, under the aegis of the Commission's Department of Social Affairs. It ends on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> August.

At its opening session today, the PACC 3 heard from the AU Commissioner for Social Affairs, Advocate Bience Gawanas that

“Cultural expression is fundamental for social life and has the potential of defining public debate/discourse”. She also said that it is increasingly understood that issues such as, good governance, human rights, political freedom or respect for the law depend on cultural values, perceptions and expressions, among other things.



Placing the conference within the context of the theme, i.e. “Culture, Societies and Sustainable Development”, Commissioner Gawanas urged for culture to be viewed as the fourth pillar of development:

“Culture must no longer be the ‘missing pillar’ of sustainable development, but it should be placed at the centre of development alongside the other three pillars: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental balance”.

The Commissioner contended that by using resources such as the AU Plan of Action on Cultural and Creative Industries, as well as the recommendations coming out of PACC 3 and other national, regional and international tools on culture and development, PACC 3 would be instrumental in providing collaboration and engagement of cultural experts in advocating for culture to be given greater consideration in development.

The opening ceremony was also addressed by the Ethiopian Minister of Culture Mr Aman Abdulkadir, who paid tribute to the late Prime Minister of Ethiopia Mr Meles Zelawi, for his efforts upholding African culture, democracy and development.

Mr Kokera Rugara of the Pan African Parliament (PAP), an organ of the African Union, underscored the synergies and complementarities between the work of the AU Commission and the PAP in terms of promoting and developing African cultural identity. He referred specifically to the importance of upholding the use of African languages and religions.

The opening session of PACC 3 was also addressed by Mr Firmin Matoko, Director of the UNESCO liaison office in Addis Ababa and UNESCO representative to Ethiopia, as well as Ms Sarah Gardener, the Executive Director of the International Federation of Arts Council and Culture Agencies (IFACCA).

The cultural conference, the third of its kind, intends to build upon the thematic areas discussed in the previous two editions (i.e. PACC 1 and PACC 2). Additionally the conference will sensitize society actors on the importance of culture for sustainable development; strengthen the cross cutting nature of culture; promote the preservation of positive cultural values while combating harmful ones; gather inputs and best practices for the formulation and implementation of cultural policies and programmes in Africa; popularise the Plan of Action on Cultural and Creative Industries as a tool for the creative economy; facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences; cultivate the spirit of Pan Africanism among the young generation and organise a thematic exhibition on African shared values and the spirit of Pan Africanism. This exhibition will showcase the work of the African Academy of languages (ACALAN) and the Center for Linguistic and Historical Studies through Oral Traditions (CELTHO)- AU flagship institutions for promoting African languages and oral traditions and values.

The PACC 3 is being attended by cultural experts and practitioners; social scientists; experts in development studies; and representatives from governments, African traditional institutions and civil society among others. The pan African cultural conferences are organised by the AU Commission’s Department of Social Affairs every three years.

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