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THE SECOND ECOSOCC GENERAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS HAVE STARTED TODAY

Nairobi, Kenya – 18 December 2014. - Elections into the Second General Assembly of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union (ECOSOCC) commenced today in the capital city of Nairobi, Kenya.

The elections are being held in compliance with the Decision of the Executive Council and Assembly of Heads of State of the Union (EX/CL 849(XXV) adopted in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in July 2014. That Decision directed that elections into the new ECOSOCC Assembly must be completed before the end of 2014.



In his opening statement, Dr. Jinmi Adisa, the Director Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) and Head of the Secretariat of ECOSOCC congratulated the qualified representatives of the African Civil Society community that have gathered in Nairobi for the exercise and observed that the electoral process would determine who becomes an elected member of the ECOSOCC Assembly.



Dr. Adisa noted that the Constitutive Act of the African Union was explicit in its desire to create a people-centered community in the Union and that ECOSOCC was the main vehicle for achieving this goal. Accordingly, the conduct of ECOSOCC was pivotal in realizing the aims and objectives of the Union. Thus it ranks high as a key organ of the Union among others, such as the executive organs, the Commission and the Pan-African Parliament. Candidates for the

elections must therefore keep the role of the Organ in mind as they seek membership of ECOSOCC. He noted that the process of elections into ECOSOCC would be staggered according to regions beginning with East, Central and Southern Africa to be followed by West and North Africa. Elections into regional and continental slots will be held along with those for North Africa.

He added that the elections would be conducted by the Office of the Legal Counsel of the Union that carries out similar elections for other organs of the Union. The Office of the Legal Counsel will explain the details of the procedure. The Electoral College will include all CSO candidates that have qualified as eligible for membership of ECOSOCC Assembly. Only qualified candidates from a specific Member State of the Union can vote in the elections for the two candidates for that Member State. For regional elections, only qualified CSO representatives from the regional area can vote, while all qualified candidates can vote for the continental elections.

He stressed that participation in the ensuing ECOSOCC process would not be confined to the activities of the elected Members as all Members of the African civil society community would be associated with the work of ECOSOCC through the Sectorial Cluster Committees that are defined in the ECOSOCC Statutes as key operational Mechanisms of the Organ.



In turn, Ambassador Lazarus Kapambwe, the Advisor to the AUC Chairperson conveyed the best wishes of the Chairperson, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma to the representatives of the various civil society organizations. He informed the meeting that the AUC Chairperson attached serious significance to the election exercise and the important role that ECOSOCC must play in the African Union family. During a recent high level meeting with African Heads of States and some Members of the

AU Executive Council held last Sunday in South Africa, Dr. Zuma had reported on the progress of the ECOSOCC election exercise and promised that she would be

reporting on its conclusion to the 24th AU Summit scheduled to take place in January 2015 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. She assured that gathering that the 2nd ECOSOCC General Assembly would be in place at that time.



Mr. Mourad Ben Dhiab of the Office of the Legal Counsel then observed that the procedures for the elections are derived from the ECOSOCC Statutes approved by the Council of the Union and Assembly of the Heads of States and Governments of the Union. He took the gathering through the relevant provisions and explained how they provided the basis for the electoral guidelines that would be used for the conduct of the current elections.

Subsequently, Mr. Mando Bright of the Office of the Legal Counsel gave a detail briefing on the electoral guidelines and the Electronic voting system through which the actual elections will be conducted.



This was followed by observations and a question and answer session in which electors demanded clarification on various aspects of the exercise including the Statutes, the electoral guidelines and the voting system.

When electors were satisfied the voting processes began. The exercise went smoothly and the first session of the voting exercise was concluded appropriately for Eastern, Central and Southern Africa.

The second part of the exercise continues on 20 and 21 December 2014 under the tender sun of the capital city of Kenya in Nairobi. It would culminate in the official inauguration of the ECOSOCC General Assembly on 22 December 2014.

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