



## Press Release

### CIDO Strengthens Diaspora Partnerships in Canada



Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 1 June 2015 – The Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) of the African Union Commission has reinforced its strategic partnerships in North America in support of diaspora engagement objectives under the First 10-Year Plan of Agenda 2063.

A team from CIDO, led by Dr. Jinmi Adisa recently participated in a number of strategic activities in Canada as part of the ongoing operationalization of CIDO's strategic vision aimed at mobilizing non-state actors within civil society and the diaspora community to support the integration and development

agenda of the African Union.

Key among these activities was a project technical workshop for the design and implementation of the African Diaspora Volunteer Corps; a pioneer diaspora-for-development project developed in partnership with Cuso International, a global leader in volunteer-based development programming. During the all-day workshop held on May 11, 2015 at Cuso International headquarters in Ottawa, Canada, CIDO and Cuso International successfully developed the final technical framework for a 4-year, \$6million dollar project that would see technical experts recruited from the African Diaspora community in Canada to be placed with the AU Commission as well as with local partner organizations in five (5) AU member states to build capacity in organizational development and economic development. In addition to project funding already secured from the World Bank, CIDO and Cuso International also finalized a project proposal - aimed at securing supplementary project funding - to the Government of Canada through the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD).

As part of the proposal process the CIDO team held very positive meetings with Government of Canada officials led by Ms. Patricia Malikail, Director-General of the Pan-Africa Bureau of DFATD. Ms. Malikail indicated the appreciation of the Pan-Africa Bureau of the programs and activities of CIDO; and referred the team to the ongoing support of the Canadian government to the African Union through the NEPAD mechanism. CIDO and the DFATD team agreed to continue to exchange information with regard to funding for the African Diaspora Volunteering Project.





In addition, the CIDO team held a high level meeting with His Excellency Constant Horace, Ambassador of Mauritius to Canada and Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps in Canada. The African Diplomatic Corps is a group of 41 African Ambassadors and High Commissioners to Canada which meets regularly to discuss matters of continental interest. The purpose of the meeting was to update the Dean on the progress of the African Diaspora Volunteer Corps project, as well as CIDO's ongoing mobilization and engagement of the

African Diaspora in Canada and North America in general; and also to develop a framework for cooperation between CIDO and the diplomatic community in Canada. In his remarks to the CIDO team, the Dean welcomed the initiative of CIDO in establishing strategic diaspora partnerships in Canada; and stressed the readiness of the African Diplomatic Corps to engage with CIDO on an ongoing basis in order to ensure mutual support in matters of diaspora engagement. The Dean invited the CIDO team to make a formal presentation to the entire group of African Ambassadors as diaspora matters are currently of primary importance to all African embassies and high commissions in Canada. It was agreed that this presentation would take place within a period of a few months as part of a general meeting of the African Diplomatic Corps.

Furthermore, the CIDO team held a special meeting with the Ambassador of Ethiopia to Canada, Her Excellency Birtukan Ayano Dadi at the Ethiopian Embassy in Ottawa. The Ambassador recognized the importance of integrating the skills and resources of the African Diaspora into developmental plans and initiatives on the continent and lauded the timeliness of CIDO's efforts to channel the talent and treasure of the African Diaspora in Canada into the African Union's developmental agenda. Ambassador Dadi notified the CIDO team of the upcoming inaugural National Diaspora Festival in Ethiopia to be held in August 2015; and invited the participation and involvement of CIDO in the event. In addition, Ambassador Dadi called for the collaboration of CIDO and the Ethiopian Embassy in Canada in developing and conducting a demographic study aimed at mapping the Ethiopian diaspora community in Canada. It was agreed that the two parties, with the support of Cuso International, would conduct further discussions to determine the next steps with regard to this project.

Finally, the CIDO team had preliminary partnership meetings with the African Union 6<sup>th</sup> Region Canada (AU6RC); a leading African diaspora organization based in Canada. The purpose of the meeting was to explore opportunities for mutual cooperation around the establishment of an African diaspora network in Canada. Mr. Macaulay O. Kalu, Chairman and CEO of AU6RC expressed his organization's appreciation for CIDO's efforts to engage the African Diaspora community in Canada, and emphasized the great potential of such cooperation given the large and organized nature of the African diaspora population in Canada. He also briefed the CIDO team of AU6RC's programs and networks in Canada and assured CIDO of his organization's readiness to support CIDO's diaspora engagement activities in Canada.



In his comments, Dr. Adisa recalled the African Union's commitment to becoming a people-centred union driven by its own citizens and diaspora in the achievement of peace, prosperity and integration on the continent. Dr. Adisa reiterated the importance of CIDO's efforts to create frameworks of engagement between the African Union and African diaspora communities around the world. The two parties agreed to maintain partnership discussions through regular electronic communications.

The CIDO team was led by Dr. Jinmi Adisa, Director; and included Mr. Ahmed El-Madani El-Basheer, Head of Diaspora Division; and Mr. Kyeretwie Akwasi Osei, Desk Officer for Americas and Caribbean.

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