

**PRESS RELEASE N.174/2014****2ND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF ECOSOCC: TOGOLESE CIVIL SOCIETY RESPONDS TO THE APPEAL BY THE AFRICAN UNION**

Lome, (Togo) - 14 August 2014 : The history, role and the functions of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) of the African Union (AU), its activities and procedures, especially the eligibility criteria for election to the Second General Assembly, aroused keen interest from a large number of Togolese civil society organizations at a meeting organized on the initiative of the African Union Commission (AUC) on 14 August, 2014 at the Agora Senghor centre in Lome, Togo.



Representatives of eighty civil society organizations (CSO) from all spheres of activity responded to the invitation by the African Union Commission to participate actively in the sensitization and motivation campaign being organized for CSOs of the continent in preparation towards the 2nd ECOSOCC General Assembly elections.

The sensitization campaign, initiated by the Directorate of Citizens and Diaspora Organizations (CIDO) in pursuance of Executive Council Decision EX.CL/Dec.849(XXV) adopted by the 23rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, kicked off in Lusaka, Zambia on 12 August 2014. The sensitization campaign will continue till September at the end of which all the five regions of Africa will have been covered



At the opening session Mr Jalel Chelba, Head of Civil Society Division of CIDO/AUC, explained that ECOSOCC had a total membership of 150 comprising two representatives from each of the 54 Member States, 8 continental representatives, 10 sub-regional representatives, 20 members of the Diaspora and 6 representatives chosen by the African Union Commission in consultation with Member States and based on specific criteria. He added that ECOSOCC was an organ whose membership was elected by civil society and which represented civil society. ECOSOCC was an embodiment of the principle of democracy at its highest level since it was tasked with leading grassroots civil society organizations to the corridors where decisions were taken, thus enabling them to contribute their quota to the integration and sustainable development efforts of the continent.

Mr Chelba also stated that the AUC was expediting action with a view to finalizing the elections before the end of this year so as to inaugurate the ECOSOCC Assembly by December 2014, at the latest. The organization was therefore focusing its campaign on the States that did not have sufficient number of eligible candidates for election (read the full speech on the African Union website: www.au.int .)

Officially opening the session, the Representative of the Togolese Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, and Director of International Organizations, Mr Sébadé Toba, stated that organized civil society was very critical to ensuring good economic and political governance. He expressed his happiness with the initiative taken by the African Union to organize the sensitization and mobilization tour which would not only lead to the enhancement of the prominence of ECOSOCC, but also give a fillip to the activities of civil society organizations in the interest of the population and the common organization that is the African Union. He urged Togolese civil society organizations to show keen interest in the discussions engaged and to participate in the ECOSOCC electoral process so as to ensure the quality representation of Togo on the important body.

The meeting was characterized by extensive and frank discussions which was widely covered by the media. The discussions focused primarily on the practical modalities for developing partnership with ECOSOCC as well as the procedures for the submission of

applications. The participants enquired extensively about the relevance of the eligibility criteria. All were unanimous on the need to mobilize and join ECOSOCC but at issue was how many of them could meet the criteria, especially those relating to funding. That was the main question that had and continues to agitate the minds of most of them.

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