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AU Sensitization and Motivation Campaign in Zimbabwe for the 2nd ECOSOCC General Assembly

Harare, Zimbabwe, 15 August 2014 – Representatives of various civil society organizations in Zimbabwe met in Kariba Conference Room of Holiday Inn in Samora Machel Avenue, Harare, to participate in the awareness and motivation campaign organized by the African Union through its Citizens and Diaspora Organizations Directorate (CIDO). The campaign was held in compliance with Decision EX.CL/Dec.849(XXV), adopted at the 23rd Ordinary Session of the Executive Council in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea from, 24-27 June 2014. The Decision called on the AU Commission to conduct a sensitization campaign among Member States that did not have a sufficient number of eligible candidates for elections into the 2nd ECOSOCC General Assembly that will be established before the end of 2014.



The deliberation began with opening remarks by Ambassador Lazarous Kapambwe the Advisor of the AU Chairperson. He urged the government and people of Zimbabwe to work closely in partnership with ECOSOCC and CIDO to achieve the objectives of the sensitization campaign and noted that participation in ECOSOCC offered African civil

society the opportunity and privilege to share power and responsibility for guidance of the continent.

Subsequently, Mr. Joseph Chilengi, a member of the 1st ECOSOCC General Assembly highlighted the benefits of CSO participation in the ECOSOCC framework and the need for the Zimbabwe civil society community to organize itself adequately to assume responsibility for determining the direction of the continent. He discussed the achievements of previous ECOSOCC Assemblies and acknowledged that some mistakes were made in the processes of their operations. He called on the African civil society to learn from the achievements and the mistakes and to use both as a lesson for mapping the way forward.

In turn, Dr. Jinmi Adisa, the Director of CIDO, focused on the difficulties associated with the current ECOSOCC election process, the progress report submitted in this regard by the Commission to the Summit in Malabo, options considered by the African leaders and their decision that called for a continent-wide sensitization and motivation campaign for ECOSOCC. He elaborated on how CSOs can and should take advantage of this process and related application procedures, processes and the eligibility criteria outlined in the ECOSOCC Statutes.

The presentations were followed by a very active and intense interactive sessions in which CSOs asked questions and made comments and observations. There was concern among delegates that Zimbabwean CSOs were not represented in the last ECOSOCC General Assembly (2008-2012) and a keen sense of determination that this should not be the case in the 2nd ECOSOCC Assembly.

The consequent discussion reflected on broad range of issues. These included the requirement for registration and the danger that it could be politicized, the criteria that fifty percent of the internal resources of CSOs should be internally derived, which some participants felt had not taken account of the special circumstances of countries such as Zimbabwe and South Sudan and the functioning of their economies, as well as the need for continental ECOSOCC to be complemented and interlinked to correspondent regional structures at RECs levels. Some CSOs also stressed the need to balance obligations arising from participation in policy-making processes with normal watchdog responsibilities of CSOs.

Finally, the discussion was concluded with agreement on a strategy for moving forward. The Harare deliberation was well attended. Even so, the CSOs resolved to form a Steering Committee that would carry the message forward horizontally and vertically to all CSO groups across the country in Zimbabwe. The AU delegation was also requested to send representative(s) to the civil society expo in Harare on 4-5 September 2014 that would attract CSOs from all nooks and corners of the country.

The meeting which was attended by a Representative of the Foreign Ministry of Zimbabwe ended on this high note.

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