



## RESS RELEASE N. 234/ 2014

## AU ENCOURAGES THE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS OF GABON TO APPLY FOR THE ECOSOCC ELECTIONS



**Libreville, 19 September 2014** - The sensitisation and motivation campaign aimed at encouraging the Gabon based civil society organisations to mobilise ahead of the elections of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Assembly of the ECOSOCC was launched on 19 September 2014 at the headquarters of the Economic and Social Council (ESC) of Gabon. The meeting which brought together over sixty participants from the Gabonese civil society was an opportunity to exchange views with the African Union delegation and discuss the criteria and practical modalities of applying for the ECOSOCC membership.

Representing the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Regional Integration of the Republic of Gabon, H.E Mr Theo Sidoine Mouissi Mickele commended the initiative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma for the deployment of a sensitisation team to help stimulate the Gabonese civil society into taking active part in the ECOSOCC elections. This, he said falls in line with the values promoted by H.E Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic of Gabon who is vying for the promotion of an active and dynamic civil society in the country.

Ms Ndong Nguema Celestine, First Secretary of the Economic and Social Council of Gabon on her part, emphasized on the importance of engaging the Gabonese CSOs to

fully participate in the ECOSOCC elections. She promised to channel the information to the different sectors of the civil society.



The Head of the African Union Liaison Office to the Economic Communities of Central African States (ECCAS), Mrs. Hortense Okome Nguema, expressed satisfaction with the Government's commitment to facilitate this process by supporting AU's efforts in mobilising the population for massive participation in the ECOSOCC elections.

In his opening remarks, Mr Jalel Chelba, Head of the AU delegation, said the continental campaign has been launched to ensure the implementation of the decision EX.CL/849 (XXV) of Malabo Summit of June 2014. He said the current campaign is mostly targeting Member States that have not yet submitted sufficient number of eligible candidates so that they can be part of the ECOSOCC.

Mr. Chelba thanked the Gabonese Government for showing great interest in the activities of the ECOSOCC and for their willingness to ensure a continuation of the sensitisation and motivation campaign throughout the national territory. "This delegation was honoured by an audience granted by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Gabon, HE Professor Daniel Ona Ondo, during which he expressed the readiness of the Government to facilitate this process in a bid to ensure a greater involvement of the Gabonese civil society in the elections of this continental body" he underscored.

« The elections of which you are encouraged to participate, are elections by the civil societies themselves. ... The Governments and the AU Commission will only be observers and facilitators of the electoral process, " underscored the Head of the AU delegation.

During the interactive session with the Gabonese civil society, Mrs. Fatima Karadja, Vice President of the first General Assembly of ECOSOCC underlined the importance of involving the African civil society in the development process of the continent. She welcomed the high level debate with the participants saying it has helped to narrow the gap between the population and the continental organisation. In the same vein, Mr.

Sogodogo, from the office of the AUC Chairperson, presented the objectives of the on going sensitisation campaign of the ECOSOCC.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Nguema Okome, urged the participants to take quick action so that their application can be channelled timely to the AU headquarters. The AU sensitisation and motivation campaign in Libreville ended in an atmosphere of conviviality.

The next stop of the AU sensitisation mission for the central African region will be the Republic of Sao Tome and Principe where the delegation is expected to carry out similar exercise with the civil society organisations of Sao Tome and Principe.

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