



Press Release N°207/ 2014

Uganda Civil Society Embraces ECOSOCC.



Kampala, Uganda, 8th September 2014 – The African Union Sensitization Campaign to motivate civil society organizations to register and participate in ECOSOCC elections began in East Africa today in Kampala, Uganda. The Sensitization meeting that was held in Kagera Hall of the Hotel Africana in Kampala attracted about 40 civil society organizations and 20 resident media representatives.

The Head of the Uganda National Forum of NGOs, Mr. Richard Ssewarkiryanga, in his welcome address to the gathering, underlined the strength and vitality of the Uganda civil society community. He observed that Uganda has 12,000 registered CSOs and about 4000 of them was functional. This critical mass of CSOs had shown proven commitment and dedication to work strenuously to address socio-economic and cultural challenges and ameliorate the suffering of the people. He cited as an example the vigorous efforts deployed by the CSO community to curb the spread of HIV Aids in Uganda.

Mr. Gilbert Sendugwa of the African Centre for Freedom of Information complemented this by stressing the need for the CSO community to strengthen their efforts by working with the AU to achieve mutual objectives and to realize the vision of the founding parents of modern Africa. He stressed that the desire to create an African Union of the people required such complementarity and a framework of mutual reinforcement.

The Representative of the Uganda Government, Ambassador Nathan Ndoboli, the head of the AU Department and Acting Director of Regional Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, noted that Uganda has a vibrant civil society culture and “we have a duty in Uganda to ensure that the vibrant nature of our polity is reflected in our influence at the continental level. The richness and diversity of talent and expertise in Ugandan civil society must impact on the continental governance architecture.”

He noted that the ECOSOCC Sensitization Campaign is focused on States that do not have sufficient candidates for elections into ECOSOCC “but your presence and numbers here reassure me that our temporary presence in the insufficient column is either a historical or typographical error. It is now time for us in Uganda and in particular for our civil society to correct that error and we must do so immediately. Each and every organization here and others who are not here must all do their duty so that when the elections are held before the end of the year, the splendor of Uganda will be reflected in the strength of our participation and the sheer brilliant of its artistry” Finally, he told the AU delegation ‘to take back the message to Addis Ababa that the Uganda civil society is pledged to make Africa proud’



Following this, Amb. Lazarus Kapambwe, the Advisor to the AUC Chairperson in his opening statement, stated that this sensitization exercise attested to the sincerity and commitment of African leaders to create a people-centered community in the African Union. “This is why they took the decision that where civil society organizations have not responded to the call for partnership with governments through

ECOSOCC, the African Union Commission as the Secretariat of the Union and CIDO as the Secretariat of ECOSOCC must reach out to them and encourage them to do so.”

During the main presentations, Mr. Joseph Chilengi, IDP and Member of the 1st ECOSOCC Permanent General Assembly highlighted the history, role and functions of ECOSOCC, its achievements and challenges.

Dr. Jinmi Adisa, the Director of the Civil Society and Diaspora Directorate then highlighted the experience of the call for applications for the 2nd ECOSOCC General Assembly, the progress report provided to the executive organ of the Union in Malabo in June 2014 and their consequent decision that paved way for the sensitization exercise and the time frame for its implementation. He analyzed the purpose and objectives of the sensitization exercise within the context of that decision. He then went on to provide details of the application procedure and processes, the eligibility criteria and follow-up measures that will set the stage for actual elections before the end of the year. He outlined concrete measures that CSOs should take to meet the deadline and approaches that would reduce disqualifications and increase CSO participation rates.



The interactive session that followed triggered in-depth discussions on the activities and impact of ECOSOCC and the AU, gender sensitivity within them, the need for the AU to improve its models for communication and outreach with the wider African Society. The issue of cluster operations within ECOSOCC also attracted attention as well as accountability of elected representatives within ECOSOCC and the larger AU. Comments and observations were made regarding the ECOSOCC Statutes and the eligibility criteria particularly the 50 per cent funding requirement, AGENDA 2063 and the Ebola epidemic in Africa.

The Campaign ended with a set of decisions and conclusion adopted by the CSOs at the meeting. First was that the gathering embraced the ECOSOCC ideal and recognized it as a platform through which Uganda civil society can address the challenges that confronted African people. Second and as a result, the CSOs pledged ensure active participation and effective response to the call for membership of the 2nd ECOSOCC General Assembly. Third and consequently, the CSOs agreed to hold a follow-up meeting to develop appropriate strategies of engagement in the short and long term, before and after elections.

The CSOs agreed on the need for this strategy to include mechanisms of accountability and responsiveness by members elected to represent Uganda. This would involve the creation and sustenance of a national ECOSOCC chapter and the concurrent requirement for ECOSOCC and the African Union to provide resource support for this process of accountability. Concomitantly, the CSOs also agreed on the need to press for some changes in the current ECOSOCC Statutes to allow for provisions for recall of

elected members that were not accountable to the national constituencies that have chosen them and for the reconsideration of the current provision that fifty per cent of the resources of eligible CSOs must be internally derived.

Several CSOs observed that it is wrong to define the orientation of CSOs through financing rather than the impact of their work in society. The CSOs also agreed on the need to create organic linkages for ECOSOCC structures at national levels beyond the ECOSOCC chapter such as national cluster structures to complement and work with respondent ECISOCC Structures at the continental level. Moreover, they agreed that the AU still had much work to do in terms of image building to ensure that the African people in general are well connected to it.



The session ended with the closing statement of Fr. Sylvester, the Executive Secretary of the Uganda Joint Council of Churches who noted that the sensitization exercise had been very productive but its true measure can only be achieved through practical measures and devoted efforts to implement the outcomes.



For any further information please contact :

Mr. Michael Fikre, Directorate of Information and Communication, Email: MichaelF@africa-union.org,
cell: +256 786636206

For further information contact

Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission | E-mail: dinfo@african-union.org | Web Site: www.au.int | Addis Ababa | Ethiopia

Follow us

Face book: <https://www.facebook.com/AfricanUnionCommission>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/AfricanUnion>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/AUCommission>

Learn more at:

<http://www.au.int>