

Welcome Address by Ambassador Nathan Ndoboli, Head AU Department and Acting Director/Regional Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Uganda, at the ECOSOCC Sensitization and Motivation Campaign for Ugandan CSOs, Africana Hotel, Kampala, Uganda, 8 September 2014.

Your Excellency, Advisor to the AU Chairperson,

The Director, Citizens and Diaspora Directorate, AU Commission,

The Executive Director, NGO Forum

Distinguished Delegates of Ugandan Civil Society,

Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I consider it a great honor to welcome you all to this ECOSOCC Sensitization and Motivation Campaign for civil society organizations in Uganda. Our country has a strong civil society culture. Moreover, the governance ethic of Uganda is people-oriented. Significantly also, Uganda stands committed to the integration and development agenda of the African Union.

Uganda shares the affectation of the African Union that governance must be linked to the desire and wishes of people at the grassroots level. This is why we supported the idea of creating the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) at the inception of the Union as an organ that will enlist and enable the effective participation of civil society in the management of our continent.

In doing so, Uganda and other Member States of the Union were clear in their minds about what ECOSOCC is designed to do. ECOSOCC was created as a policy organ through which the African civil society community can interact as actors in their own right in the policy making process and contribute directly to the process of African emancipation.

ECOSOCC was not established as a platform for sensationalism or adversarial politics. It is a participatory organ designed to ensure that the programs and policies of the union, its vision, work plan and agenda are such that will ensure that we rid the continent of poverty, squalor, ignorance, want, diseases and epidemics. It is an instrument for harnessing the talents and capacities of African society outside government to meet the demands of our people. ECOSOCC

brings in civil society into governance as equal stakeholders who must also contribute their quota to making things right.

The distinct character of ECOSOCC arises from three important features. It is elected and led by civil society. Second, it is an operational body that must feed inputs into the policy process. Third is that its mandate or scope for advice is unrestricted as long as it is rational, instructive and constructive.

The commitment of the Uganda government is to ensure ECOSOC becomes a building block in state-society relationship at the national, regional and continental level in general and the pursuit of African integration and development in particular.

It is within this context that I have come here today to urge all civil society organizations in Uganda to register and participate in the ECOSOCC election process as both a patriotic and continental obligation. 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 the talent and expertise in Ugandan civil society must impact on the continental governance architecture.

The ECOSOCC sensitization campaign is focused on states that do not have sufficient candidates for elections into ECOSOCC. Surely, Uganda cannot and should not be in this column. We have only two seats to fill as Member States and others that we can fill at continental and regional levels. Uganda has abundant civil society organizations, including NGOs, social, professional, cultural organizations, trade unions and community based organizations to fill our vacancies and even help others in the region and continent to fill their own slots, if the rules had permitted us to do so.

Your presence and numbers here reassure me that our temporary presence in the insufficient candidates 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 shall do so immediately. Each and every organization here and others who are not here must all do their duty so that when the ECOSOCC elections are held before the end of this year, the splendor of Uganda will be reflected in the strength of our participation and the sheer brilliance of its artistry.

On this note, I welcome the AU delegation to Uganda. I want them to take back the message to Addis Ababa that Ugandan civil society is pledged to make Africa proud.