

**Opening Statement delivered by Amb. Lazarus Kapambwe, Advisor to the AUC Chairperson, at the ECOSOCC Sensitization and Motivation Campaign, Hotel Africana, Kampala, 8 September 2014.**

To begin with, I would like to thank the representatives of Uganda civil society organizations gathered here today for honoring the invitation of the African Union to attend this ECOSOC Sensitization and Motivation Campaign in Kampala. My gratitude also goes to the CSOs that supported the AU in arranging this event, the Government of Uganda, and especially, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for facilitating this meeting.

This is the continuation of an exercise that began in June 2014 when the Executive Council of the African Union adopted Decision EX/CL/849 (XXV) on ECOSOCC Elections. The Decision directed the Commission to undertake continent wide sensitization campaign missions to Member States of the African Union that do not have sufficient eligible candidates for elections into the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union (ECOSOCC).

As you are aware, ECOSOCC is the civil society parliament of the Union designed to foster the partnership of governments and civil society within the framework of the African Union. As a representative parliament of the African civil society community, it is a mechanism for connecting the governance structure of the continental body to the grassroots of African society.

The General Assembly as the supreme organ of ECOSOCC is composed of 150 members including 2 from each Member State of the Union, 20 representatives of the African Diaspora in the different parts of the world, 5 continental CSOs and 10 sub-regional CSOs. The framework for participation in ECISOCC is comprehensive. It embraces all relevant segments of civil society including NGOs, Trade Unions, social and professional groups such as lawyers, doctors and medical workers, artisans, market associations, cultural groups etc.

The representatives of these non-state actors constitute the Electoral College for members of ECOSOCC. The leadership is also elected from CSO ranks. Members of the General Assembly of ECOSOCC work with other organs of the Union to formulate, implement and execute policies. The leadership of ECOSOCC sits with members of the Pan-African Parliament and Ministers and Heads of States to take decisions on all matters affecting the continent and the welfare and development of African People as a whole.

ECOSOCC is a unique experiment and a unique experience. Subsequently, Mr. Chilengi, a member of the last ECISOCC Assembly and Dr. Adisa, the Director of the Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) that serves as the Secretariat of

ECOSOCC would elaborate on the role, function, achievements and challenges of ECOSOCC and how it has impacted on Africa's integration and development agenda.

Suffice to note here that this revolutionary framework that connects the people at the grassroots to the continental governance architecture obliges the African civil community to take advantage of its presence to bring their talent, knowledge and enterprise to bear on the process of Africa's development.

Our meeting today attests to the honesty and sincerity of our leaders when they declared that the African Union would be a Union of the people instead of an Assembly of Heads of States. This is why they took the decision that where the civil society organizations have not responded appropriately to the need for partnership with African leaders, the Commission as the Secretariat of the Union and CIDO as the Secretariat of ECOSOCC must reach out to the them and encourage them to do so.

This is the journey that has taken us to Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho, Benin, Togo, Senegal and Cape Verde. It is a journey that is ongoing in Mozambique, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and DRC etc. It is the journey that has brought us here to urge you, our brothers and sisters, to join hands with us in the struggle for African emancipation and self-realization by registering and participating in the AU ECOSOCC election process. I am confident that you will respond positively to this call.

I thank you all.