

Opening Statement by Amb. Lazarous Kapambwe, Advisor to the AU Chairperson, at the ECOSOCC Sensitization and Motivation Campaign, Victoria, Seychelles, 19 September 2014.

Your Excellency, Honorable Minister Jean Paul Adam

The Chairperson, Liaison Unit for Non-Governmental Organizations (LUNGOS)

Distinguished Delegates of Civil Society Organizations in Seychelles

Representatives of the Media,

Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

To begin with, I would like to express the gratitude of my delegation to the Government and people of Seychelles for the warm welcome accorded to us since our arrival. We have held a series of interviews and meetings with government officials and the wider civil society including the media. In each and every one of these encounters the warmth, kindness and hospitality of the people of Seychelles has been very much in evidence. This spirit of kinship that gives Pan-Africanism a homely flavour delights us.

The purpose of our mission here is to implement the directives of the Executive Council of the African Union at its 21st Ordinary Session held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in June 2014. Council had received a report on the progress of elections to the General Assembly of the African Union Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) to the effect that the process was delayed because about 26 Member States of the Union did not have a sufficient number of candidates to enable credible elections in those countries. In order to ensure broad representation and wider legitimacy, Council directed that the Commission should undertake a continent-wide sensitization and motivation campaign that would encourage and inspire civil society organisations in those Member States to register and participate in the elections. Council set a timeframe of three months for the sensitization programme.

Council further directed that whatever the outcomes of the sensitization exercise, elections into the 2nd ECOSOCC General Assembly should be concluded before the end of this year. The outcomes will determine the nature of the subsequent Assembly. If the number of elected candidates is sufficient to form a quorum, the 2nd ECOSOCC Assembly will be permanent with tenure of four years. If the numbers are not sufficient, the Assembly will be interim with tenure of two years.

This is the mission that has brought us here to Seychelles. It is our expectation and hope that Seychelles will respond positively to this call and contribute to a process that will give the election outcomes the quorum required to enable the African Union establish a permanent General Assembly for ECOSOCC toward the end of 2014.

We are encouraged in this thinking by the history of Seychelles's previous participation in ECOSOCC. Seychelles was fully represented in the 1st Permanent General Assembly of ECOSOCC that concluded its tenure in September 2012 and its representatives participated actively in its various processes.

The challenge of ECOSOCC as an organ in its next congregation would be to assume full maturity so that it increases its relevance, scope of activities, impact and importance in the family of African Union organs. Simultaneously it must broaden its range of concerns beyond a welfare focus to anchor more firmly the people-oriented community objectives of the African Union. To do this effectively, ECOSOCC must give immediate and practical expression to the operations of the sectoral cluster committees as stipulated in its Statutes as this will link the African Union organically with African grassroots organizations.

Only an active and participatory framework inspired and sustained by African civil society organizations in Seychelles and other Member States of the Union can make this possible. Seychelles as a littoral state with a small population has a unique perspective of wisdom and enterprise that it can bring productively to bear on this effort. It is that perspective and wisdom that we have come here to inspire today. Our presence here is to bring that message directly to the people of Seychelles. Africa demands that its people in all Member States should respond positively to this call of duty. We are confident that you will do so appropriately.

I thank you all.