

**OPENING REMARKS BY MR. JEAN-PAUL ADAM, MINISTER FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AT THE SENSITIZATION PROGRAMME ON
ECOSOCC ELECTION PROCESS
CARE HOUSE, FRIDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2014**

Amb. Lazarus Kapambwe, Special Advisor to the Chairperson of the African Union

Members of the Delegation from the African Union,

Dr. Jinmi Adisa, Director of CIDO

Mr. Bernard Elizabeth, Honorary Chairperson of LUNGOS,

Members of NGOs and Civil Society Organizations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First and foremost, I would like to extend a warm welcome to Ambassador Kapambwe and his delegation to Seychelles.

I appreciate immensely the opportunity to say a few words on behalf of the government on this occasion.

Especially as the aim of our government has always been to place people at the centre of development.

As an African Small Island Developing State, with limited natural resources- it has been essential that we look to our human resource as the first platform for our development.

Investing in people is not possible without a strong and inclusive framework that recognizes the multi-faceted nature of sustainable development, and the importance of engagement with our citizens on the basis of understanding, respect and the promotion of the dignity of our society.

For us in Seychelles this is a promise that ECOSOCC can bring- an unparalleled platform for citizen engagement at the continental level.

Africa, as a continent, is rich and diverse in terms of its people. In Seychelles, we are proud to represent this richness in microcosm- as Africa's smallest state.

We often speak of Africa's economic rise being built on its natural resources.

But the real transformation of Africa- the transformation that we all believe in- will happen through its people. This is the spirit of pan-Africanism that will drive our transformation.

A key component of this transformation is thus to build a Union that is people-oriented; to have a Union that recognizes the wealth of human and institutional resources at the grassroots level; a Union that is responsive to the calls for democracy and sustainable development from its civil society institutions.

We will recall that is very much in this spirit that the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) was formed, with the distinctive character of providing a platform for civil society organizations to organize themselves to work with the African Union, in order to play an active role and in the development of principles, programmes and policies of the African Union that touch people at the grassroots level.

ECOSOCC is a fairly new organ of the African Union, in that the first permanent General Assembly was launched in 2008. In fact, some of you may recall the visit of a 2-member delegation from the African Union in 2009, on a sensitization mission similar to the one that gathers us here today.

For Seychelles, the mission culminated in the election of two civil society representatives, Mr. Steve Lalande and Mrs. Sylvianne Valmont, to be part of the first General Assembly of the ECOSOCC.

I take the opportunity to warmly thank and congratulate them both on their pioneering role.

It is with pride that I also note that Mr. Lalande represented Seychelles on the Standing Committee of the ECOSOCC and was also elected as the Chairperson of the Trade and Industry Cluster of ECOSOCC. We will also be taking the presidency.

The Government of Seychelles is proud of these achievements because it recognizes civil society as a critical partner in development. This partnership has been concretized through an MOU between the Liaison Unit of Non-governmental Organisations (LUNGOS), the national platform for NGOs and the Government in 2008.

Only a few months ago on 20th July 2014 LUNGOS celebrated its 25th anniversary. Government believes that over the years LUNGOS has played a pivotal role in spearheading effective civil society engagement, to complement the work of government, and where necessary to highlight gaps that exist.

This government and civil society relationship helps us build a stronger and more resilient nation.

If I look into the recent past- momentous changes such as those undertaken through our economic reforms of 2008 would not have been possible without strong engagement from our civil society. Our new economic resilience is centred on economic empowerment and engagement of citizens.

If I look into the near future- we will not be able to seize all the opportunities of our “Blue Economy” without strong citizen engagement. We have been encouraged by the ideas of how to better develop our oceanic potential from our young people and from members of our community such as fishermen who have intrinsically understood that we have to protect to be able to profit.

Our Blue Economy is also about Africa’s transformation through Agenda 2063- whereby Africa can reclaim its oceans. We need more civil society engagement in Africa to ensure that more of the benefits of Africa’s oceans benefit Africans.

I would like to, therefore, encourage civil society organizations represented here today to apply for membership to the second General Assembly and contribute to the work of the African Union, in all its facets. This will be an important extension of the work currently being carried out by Seychelles to ensure that the work of our Union- for the next 50 years- reflects the opportunities that the island nations of Africa offer the African family as well as address our unique challenges.

With the work being carried out to elaborate the future we want for Africa, through Agenda 2063, there is no doubt that the civil society from Seychelles could bring a unique perspective to the work of ECOSOCC.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Ambassador Kapambwe and his delegation for their presence in Seychelles and it is my sincere hope that today’s programme is fruitful and culminates in getting Seychelles represented in the Second General Assembly of the ECOSOCC.

I have great pleasure to therefore declare this meeting open.

Thank you.