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**Keynote Address by Mr. Joseph Chilengi, Presiding Officer  
of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African  
Union (ECOSOCC) at the 1<sup>st</sup> Ordinary Session of the  
Standing Committee of the 2<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly of the  
Khartoum, Sudan, 26-28 May 2015**

**Keynote Address by Mr. Joseph Chilengi, Presiding Officer of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union (ECOSOCC) at the 1<sup>st</sup> Ordinary Session of the Standing Committee of the 2<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly of the Khartoum, Sudan, 26-28 May 2015**

**Our Guest of Honor, Your Excellency, Mr. Kamal Ismail, State Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Sudan and Representative of our Host, the Sudanese Government, of the African and Other Diplomatic Corps Members,**

**The Director of CIDO and Head of the ECOSOCC Secretariat**

**Your Excellency, Amb. Ibrahim Kamara, Representative of the African Union Liaison Office in Sudan,**

**Honorable, Commissioner, Meddy Kaggwa, Representative of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights,**

**Honorable Colleagues and Members of the Bureau of ECOSOCC**

**Honorable Members of the Standing Committee of ECOSOCC,**

**Our Local Organizing Partner,**

**Distinguished Members of the Sudanese and African Civil Society,**

**Invited Guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the 1<sup>st</sup> Standing Committee of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Permanent General Assembly of ECOSOCC in Khartoum, Sudan, from 26-28 May 2015. The General Assembly of ECOSOCC in the exercise of its mandate under Article 10 of the ECOSOCC Statutes directed the Presiding Officer and the Secretariat to prepare a meeting of the Standing Committee to follow-up on ECOSOCC Work Program and the implementation of its decisions as the highest policy making body of the Organ in the course of its meeting in Cairo on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2015. In the aftermath of the meeting the Presiding Officer and the Secretariat were engaged in consultation with the Sudanese Government which graciously accepted to host the meeting.

The objective of this meeting is to review the current status of ECOSOCC, develop and adopt appropriate work plan, tools and instruments to fulfill the mission objectives in the current year and to plan ahead for 2016. The meeting will also report and appraise the framework of activities undertaken to implement the Cairo Decisions of the ECOSOCC General Assembly and the wider requirements of the Union including the directives of the Executive Organs, particularly the Executive Council and Assembly of the Union as well as the Constitutive Act which stresses the need for the continental integration process to be people-centred and people-driven.

Charity begins at home and the watchword of this ECOSOCC Assembly will be transparency. Transparency, as always, begins with auditing and finances. This meeting will receive a Secretariat Report on the State of ECOSOCC expenditure including what has been spent, on what and with whose authority. We will receive the balance sheet of expenditure and decide what to do with it in accordance with our mandate and statutory obligations. Alongside this, I will offer this Assembly a report on the outcome of AU budget session held in Mekelle, Ethiopia from 13-16 May 2015 and the accepted or projected budget estimates for 2016 so that we can align program and plans to maximize cost-effectiveness and cost-efficiency.

Within this scope, we shall also discuss plans for transformation of the AU and proposed structural changes and the implications for the people-centred nexus of the African Union as mandated by the Constitutive Act. These plans were introduced surreptitiously in the course of the recent AU budget sessions in Mekelle where I took the floor to reflect upon it with due concern. It would appear that the Commission is making plans for changes without reference or discussion of the wider African Union family. It is incumbent upon ECOSOCC, other organs and the wider African civil society community to be vigilant on this score to ensure that the people-centred progressive development of the African Union system is as a public enterprise focused on public good rather than as a business enterprise driven by business models and reform agenda sponsored by external interests and financial institutions.

This ECOSOCC meeting that comes just ahead of the June Sessions of the AU Executive Council and Summit will also consider and approve the substance of ECOSOCC report to the Summit as mandated by Article 10 of the ECOSOCC Statutes so that what we present will be the authentic outcome of a constitutional process. Aside from this, we shall also begin the process of exploring guidelines for the

operationalization of Sectoral Cluster Committees and National ECOSOCC Chapters as key operational mechanisms that will link ECOSOCC operations to the African grassroots as the fulcrum of a people-oriented African Union system.

In the course of this session also, we shall have a wider AU Sensitization program for the Sudanese civil society and collaborate with our local organizing partners and the wider Sudanese society by participating in symposia and seminar relating to issues of pressing concern in their Society which includes the use of sanctions among others. We shall engage in this outreach process to mark the commemoration of May 25 as Africa Day and to celebrate the institution of the African Union as a weeklong concern.

Sudan and its capital Khartoum, offers us a unique and pleasant venue for this deliberation and the choice of this venue reflects our wish to share the labours of love for the African Union. I wish to thank the Secretariat and CIDO and its Director, Dr. Adisa for working closely with the Bureau of ECOSOCC that I have the honor to lead in making adequate preparations for this meeting.

I call on Members of ECOSOCC invited guests and participants alike to savour the kindness and hospitality of our generous hosts in Sudan. We are indebted to the Government and People of Sudan for making us feel so much at home in this uniquely pleasant African environment. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the efforts of our local organizing partner and especially Mr. Ibrahim Abdulhalim and Ms. Hanadi Hussein for the assistance rendered to ECOSOCC and the African Union in the preparation of this meeting.

Al Salamu alaikum

I thank you all.