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**Welcome Address by Dr. Jinmi Adisa, Director, Citizens and
Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) Head of ECOSOCC Secretariat
at the 1st Ordinary Session of the Standing Committee of the
2nd General Assembly of the Economic, Social and Cultural
Council of the African Union (ECOSOCC), Khartoum, Sudan,
26-28 May 2015**

Welcome Address by Dr. Jinmi Adisa, Director, Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) Head of ECOSOCC Secretariat at the 1st Ordinary Session of the Standing Committee of the 2nd General Assembly of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union (ECOSOCC), 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 the Host Government

Hon. Mr. Joseph Chilengi, ECOSOCC Presiding Officer,

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

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

Honorable Members of the Bureau,

Honorable Members of the Standing Committee of ECOSOCC,

Distinguished Delegates of the African Civil Society,

Members of the African and Foreign Diplomatic Corps

Colleagues from the African Union Commission

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the African Union Commission, I am happy to welcome you all to this inaugural session of the Standing Committee of the 2nd ECOSOCC Permanent General Assembly that is taking place in Khartoum, Sudan from 26-28 May 2015. The convening of this session is in pursuance of the directive issued by the General Assembly of ECOSOCC as the highest policy making body of the Organ at its meeting in Cairo, Egypt from 27 February to 1st March 2015.

Since that directive was issued, the Secretariat, the Presiding Officer and the Bureau have consulted in earnest with the Government of the Republic of Sudan

about hosting the meeting. We are here today as a result and our first obligation is to thank the Government and people of Sudan for demonstrating their deep commitment to the Pan-African ethics of the African Union in agreeing to host this meeting. We are all happy to be here because Sudan feels like home, receives as home and acts as home. Since our arrival here prior to this meeting our hosts at both the level of government as well as civil society have been effusive in their appreciation of our presence. We wish to express our gratitude through the Foreign Minister and our local organizing partner, National Group of Human Rights for this kind hospitality and to assure them that we shall always cherish this experience.

I wish also to welcome all members of the Standing Committee including the Bureau for taking time and making efforts to be here today. I am aware that each and every one of you have other pressing commitments and prior obligations. Nonetheless, you are here with willingness and desire to serve the cause of integration and development in Africa. Africa greets you all.

I must also formally welcome the wider members of our constituency in civil society that have come here today in solidarity to observe the workings of their organ within the AU. This is not an accident. The Constitutive Act of the African Union which serves as the Magna Carta of our regional organization is specific in its commitment to create a people-centred and people-driven African community in the African Union. The objective of the Union is to create a dynamic and prosperous Africa driven by its people. This is a credo that we have had at various times to remind the leaders and people of the continent that we must not forget. It is a maxim that must inform the shape and development of AU Structures, policies and programs. The people-centred commitments lies at the heart of the African Union experiment. The founders of the Union were clear in their orientation, focus and express commitments. Your presence here as grassroots representatives at this ECOSOCC gathering honors that commitment. It is a commitment that you should stand ready to defend because our experience in Africa is that much too often, as institutions grow and develop, several actors in the public sphere forget or are unaware of the *raison d'être* of the institutions they represent. In such case, the people have an obligation to

remind them. Otherwise, as my people in the forest region of Nigeria are often keen to point out “A river that forgets its source eventually dries out.”

Article 10 of the Statutes of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union designates the Standing Committee of ECOSOCC as the Executive Organ that “coordinates the work of ECOSOCC and prepare and submit annual reports of ECOSOCC to the Assembly of the Union.” This statutory obligation sums up the intention and purpose of this meeting which would consider important issues relating to activities, work programs, budget, summit reports and related work plans. The full substance of that agenda would be revealed by the Hon. Presiding Officer in his subsequent keynote address. Suffices to note here that the 1st Ordinary Session of the Standing Committee indicates that ECOSOCC work has begun in earnest.

Finally, I must express the appreciation of the Secretariat in CIDO and the AU Commission for the warm support and assistance of our host Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the local Organizing Partners in civil society, the National Group for Human Rights especially, Mr. Ibrahim Abdulhalim and Ms. Hanadi Hussein for working closely with us to make this event successful.