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*Press Release*

**Chairperson Commends AUC Administration and HR Staff for their Hard Work, During Visit to Refurbished Offices**



*Chairperson Ping and Deputy Chairperson Mwencha receive a warm welcome from AHRM Staff*

**Addis Ababa, 13 January 2012** - The Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), Dr. Jean Ping and the Deputy Chairperson, Mr. Erastus Mwencha, on Thursday 12 January 2012, paid a visit to the Directorate of Administration and Human Resources Management (AHRM), in their refurbished offices, at AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa.

Welcoming the Chairperson and his Deputy, the Director of Administration and Human Resources Management, Dr. Abdul-Hakim Elwaer, said that he and his staff were honoured by the visit and thanked the Leadership of the Commission for making staff welfare a priority.

He recalled that a few years ago when the Commission's new Leadership was elected, there was widespread discontent amongst staff over inadequate human resources service delivery and poor customer service. The Leadership immediately ordered a careful analysis of the situation, which concluded that the lack of office automation, a staff-friendly work environment and a customer-focused work culture in the treatment of staff issues, were possible causes of the malaise amongst current and former staff.

After consultations with staff, Dr. Elwaer added, management decided, among other measures, to convert the cramped, unhealthy and cloistered AHRM offices to a world class open space work environment; an approach first tested in the corporate world and soon adopted by the World Bank and the United Nations. The Directorate mobilized resources for the project, whose implementation lasted six months, ending in the New Year.

Dr. Elwaer further told the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson that since staff moved into their new open office space a few months ago, productivity, efficiency and customer satisfaction have greatly improved, as AHRM staff have easier contact with each other and can resolve customer problems without delay. Studies are underway to replicate the open space office model in the other departments and directorates of the Commission, over the next two years, taking into account the new Office Complex that will soon be inaugurated.

After a guided tour of the refurbished office space, the Chairperson thanked and commended the AHRM staff for their hard work and dedication, which has in the last few years, improved administration and human resources management at the Commission.



*The Chairperson offers a slice of cake to an AHRM Division Head*

“Administration and human resources are the backbone of any modern organization; you are the pillars of the Commission. From recruitment to separation, all staff need your services, including the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and Commissioners. Though I may be the face and voice of the Commission, your responsibilities are equally important; your work is crucial in all decisions regarding recruitment, separation and everything else in-between,” the Chairperson explained.

Dr. Ping encouraged the staff to continue working hard, because though administration and human resources management at the AUC have improved, the situation is not yet perfect. He emphasized the importance of geographical and gender balance in recruitment decisions, without sacrificing academic qualification, experience and competence.

“The world is changing and our role as an organization in the continent and beyond will have to adapt. A lot of progress has been made and many of the staff complaints we inherited have been resolved. Under the leadership of the Deputy Chairperson, you have done a good job and I congratulate you. Keep it up!” The Chairperson stated.

Commissioners had paid a visit to the Directorate the previous day, on 11 January 2012, and some Ambassadors of Member States have also toured the facility. After a recent visit, the Ambassador of Tanzania complimented the AUC management in the following words: “This is the first time I feel our resources are not wasted!”

Ms. Dina Kigga, an AHRM staff from Uganda, who has been employed with the Commission since 1985, made the following comments after the Chairperson’s visit: “What I like the most about this set-up is that it gives us more access to interact with each other. The Chairperson’s visit was a morale booster. I got to talk to the Chairperson for the first time. It was a real honour and privilege. We always see the leadership of the Commission from a distance but today we actually had the privilege to see them at our work station and talk to them.”



*A smiling AHRM Director, Dr. Abdul-Hakim Elwaer, in his transparent, open space glass office (Photo O.Bama)*

The Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson were accompanied by the Chief of Staff in the Bureau of the Chairperson, the Secretary General of the Commission, the Deputy Chief of Staff in the Bureau of the Chairperson, as well as the Chairperson’s Diplomatic Adviser and several other senior officials of the Commission, including the Director of Information and Communication and the Chief of Protocol.

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