

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

Press Release

A Discussion on Civic Engagement and Women's Political Participation across Continents

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 25 February 2016 - The African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with the United States Mission to the African Union (USAU) held a discussion on Civic Engagement and Women's Political Participation in honor of U.S Black history month and AU Project 2016.

The objective of the discussion was to provide a platform to share experiences between the continents.

To ensure a lively discussion, five panellists were selected from both the AUC and the US. The AUC panellists included, Ms. Victoria Maloka, Head of Coordination and Outreach Division, AUC Women and Gender Directorate, Amb. Salah Hammad, Project 2016, Human Rights Expert, AUC Political Affairs Department, and Ms. Kesaobaka Pharatthathe, AUC Economic Affairs Department, Youth representative.

The US panellists included Ms. Patrisse Cullors, a co-founder of the Black Lives Matter movement and Ms. Monica Dennis is the New York City Regional Coordinator for the Black Lives Matter movement.

The discussion which took place both on Skype and twitter through the hashtag AUProject2016 was an opportunity to draw connections on civic engagement and social issues between Black American's and Africans.

It was also an opportunity to revive old bonds. As many may recall the relationship of the AU and black Americans is anything but new. In the summit of 1964, in Cairo, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) issued a resolution on racial discrimination in the USA. African Members states expressed sympathy and concern for the situation in the US and urged the USA to eliminate all forms of discrimination.

In 1964 Africa's main human rights concern was abolishing the apartheid and gaining independence. Yesterday's conversation was proof that Africa has since evolved. The dialogue on Human rights and Civic participation was pegged to the AU's theme of 2016

“The year of human rights with a particular focus on the rights of women” with conversations centred on the promotion and protections of human rights, the necessity of engaging and mainstreaming women and youth -who are the demographic dividend of the continent, the challenges faced, and the way forward.

As the discussions grew it was easy to draw common good practices from across the continents, i.e. Creating spaces where women and youth are key and central, spaces which can uplift and centralize those voices and where conversations are driven by people’s lives instead of policies. Policies need to reflect the realities on the ground and once this is established the focus needs to be more action.

The event enlisted the support of various departments in the AUC. This includes the Directorate of Information and Communication (DIC), Directorate of Women and Gender (WGD), The Human resources, Science and Technology Department (HRST), Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and was coordinated by the Directorate of Citizens and Diaspora Organization (CIDO).

For more information on the event, please contact: Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO); Ms. Eiman Kheir; Email: KheirE@africa-union.org