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DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

PRESS RELEASE

REGIONAL CONSULTATION TO PROMOTE CONSTITUTIONALISM AND RULE OF LAW IN CENTRAL AFRICA



Malabo 21 February 2017 – The Department of Political Affairs of the African Union Commission (AUC) is currently holding a brainstorming meeting with parliamentarians and the judiciary to exchange views and share best practices on how to promote constitutionalism and the rule of law in the Central African region.

The three-day meeting which kicked off on Tuesday 21 February 2017 at the Sipopo Conference Center in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, brought together experts from the Central African region to discuss ways to advance the democratization process in the region by strengthening the existing legal instruments that will better the lives of the citizens so that they can effectively and efficiently contribute to the development of the continent.

Addressing the participants while presiding at the opening ceremony of the Regional Consultation meeting, the Representative of the Government of Equatorial Guinea, H.E



Mr. Martina Masougou Oyana, expressed his appreciation to the AUC for choosing Malabo to host such an important meeting aimed at proposing useful

solutions with the view to consolidate a peaceful environment for the African people. He recalled that there has been a growing interest on issues of democracy and good governance in Africa that reinforces the idea that democracy and good governance are a prerequisite for sustainable socio-economic development on the continent. “Democracy and good governance is both a matter of duty and rights for any citizen” noted Mr. Oyana. He called on the need for all AU Member countries to ratify and domesticate the African Charter on Election, Democracy and Governance to help build a stronger continent.



Speaking earlier, the Special Representative of the AUC Chairperson to the Central African Region, H.E Mr. Lebatt Mohamed El Hacene, called on the participants to propose concrete recommendations that will help to strengthen the existing continental institutions dealing with constitutionalism and the rule of law in general and in the central African region in particular. He noted that civic rights and responsibilities are necessary to ensure the effective participation of citizens so that their voices are taken into account during decision making that have a direct bearing on their lives. He hoped that good governance in the central African region will lead public actions or decisions taken by government to be managed in a transparent, efficient, responsible and fair

manner while abiding by the rules as stipulated in the African development Agenda 2063 in its aspiration 3 which underlines the following: "Africa that has implemented good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law" through the consolidation of democratic gains of the continent and improving the quality of governance, the establishment of strong institutions, development oriented and the emergence of visionary leadership.

The Permanent Representative of the Economic Community for Central African States (ECCAS) to the AUC, H.E Dr. Theodore Njikam, commended the AUC for the initiative which he said will help to bring Member States of the Central African region together as one people, working together and speak with one voice to address the many socio-economic and political challenges that have weakened the sub-region. He said it is high time that the member countries of this region speed up their action plan for development and stop lagging behind given that they have the potentials and resources to achieve better results. Dr. Njikam underscored the need for political will to enable a successful ratification and implementation of all the AU legal instruments, notably those related to constitutionalism and the rule of law.

According to Mr. MBarî Calixte Aristide, Ag. Head of the Democracy, Governance, Human Rights and Elections Division at the Department of Political Affairs, AUC, the establishment of a participatory democracy will give the people the opportunity to choose their leaders and be able to hold them accountable for their governance and decisions, including judicial obligations helping them to ensure the smooth functioning and stability of the State.

During the meeting, several case studies were presented as best practices including the experience of the Gacaca Courts and the Abunzi which are traditionally inspired ways to deliver justice and promote reconciliation in Rwanda after the 1994 Genocide. "These mechanisms proved to be effective and efficient as grass-root and home-grown approaches of conflict resolution, among other objectives". Said Mr. Frank Mugisha, Programme Manager of The Legal Aid Forum-Rwanda..

The regional consultation to promote constitutionalism and the rule of law in central Africa ends on Thursday 23 February 2017.

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