

**Press Release N° 166/2017**

**THE CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP TO ENGAGE TRADITIONAL JUSTICE  
STRUCTURES AND MEMBERS OF THE JUDICIARY TO PROMOTE THE RULE OF  
LAW IN NORTHERN AND WESTERN AFRICA KICKED-OFF**



**Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2017** – In line with Aspiration 3 of Agenda 2063, which aims at having a continent where there is respect for the rule of law, human rights, a consultative workshop gathering representatives of judiciary and traditional justice mechanisms in the Northern and Western Africa to discuss the issue of Rule of Law and Justice Reform kicked-off today. The workshop comes in at a timely moment as they remain a key stakeholder in the promotion of constitutionalism and rule of law.

In recognition of the vital role played by the formal and the traditional courts in upholding and strengthening the rule of law this meeting is being organised by the Cluster on Constitutionalism and Rule of Law within the framework of the African Governance Architecture (AGA) as the overall political and institutional framework, aimed at connecting, empowering, and building capacities and appropriate responses to the challenges of governance in Africa, for African Union Organs and Institutions. The Cluster has its mandate to promote constitutionalism and Rule of Law in Africa and this meeting seeks to embark on a process of building capacity for the judiciary as well as traditional justice structures by engaging both these mechanisms in the Northern and Western Africa on the issue of Rule of Law.,

Adherence to the Rule of Law and Justice Reform is essential to a thriving democracy where governments and citizens are equal and accountable under the law. This is also reverberated in the spirit of one of the AU shared Values instruments, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.

During the opening ceremony Mr. Calixte Aristide Mbari, Ag. Head of the Division of Democracy, Governance, Human Rights and Elections of the Political Affairs

Department in the African Union Commission (AUC) delivered opening remarks on behalf of H.E Mrs Minata Samate Cessouma, Commissioner for Political Affairs and extended thanks to the people and Government of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire for hospitality and facilitation provided for the success of the Consultation. He explained that the workshop is the third in a series aim of meeting the relevant stakeholders in each region of the continent and combines both the west and north African region. Highlighting the importance of the rule of law and informal justice system Mr. Mbari noted that “Special focus has been given to this Consultation to discuss between informal and formal legal structures to define strategies to promote Rule of Law in the administration of justice, as a guarantee of stability, peace and social cohesion”.

Mr. Mbari concluded by stated that AUC recognizes that national, regional, continental and international collaboration is necessary to make a difference and improve the standard of living of African populations. Strengthening and promoting the rule of law are key elements in ensuring political stability and socio-economic development.

In his welcoming remarks during the Consultation, Ambassador Bafetigue Ouattara, Director of African Organizations in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs formally welcomed all participants on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire and expressed his delight that the workshop is taking place in Abidjan. “Rule of Law is fundamental for building democratic governance and disputes are settled in fair manner.” added Ambassador Ouattara. He said that the government of Côte d'Ivoire is happy to express satisfaction and will spare no efforts to make the Consultation successful. Ambassador Ouattara wished that the meeting will come up with strong recommendations that contribute to the social cohesion and reconciliation in the region.

The Consultation, which will continue up to 25<sup>th</sup> October 2017, addresses wide range of topics such as: Promoting constitutionalism and rule of law through the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance; The role of and challenges faced by judiciary in West and North Africa and sharing of the West and North African experience; Bridging the gap between the formal and informal justice structures; Importance of traditional justice mechanisms in West and North Africa. Participants will share and exchange continental, national and imperative case studies and experiences on the informal and formal judiciary mechanisms and how the synergy can foster an improved judicial system.



## Notes to the Editors:

The African Governance Architecture (AGA) is a continental institutional framework aimed at connecting, empowering and building capacities of the African Union Organs and Institutions aiming at strengthening governance and consolidating democracy in Africa. The AGA is composed of five Clusters; the Constitutionalism and Rule of Law Cluster, the Human Rights and Transitional Justice Cluster, the Democracy and Elections Cluster, The Governance, Public Service and Anti-Corruption Cluster, and the Humanitarian Affairs Cluster. These Clusters are instrumental in addressing the institutional challenges hindering the ratification, domestication, implementation of the AU Shared Values instruments. The Constitutionalism and Rule of Law Cluster was launched in Algiers, Algeria in August 2015.

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