

**NOTE TO EDITORS****Outcome of Fifth African Union Commission – United States High Level Dialogue on Political Matters**

The discussion on Democracy and Governance, co-chaired by Mr. Donald Yamamoto, Acting Assistant Secretary for African Affairs and His Excellency Minata Samate Cessouma, Commissioner for Political Affairs of the African Union Commission (AUC), exchanged views relating to the: African governance architecture, accountability and the rule of law; human rights ; elections and capacity building.

This dialogue focused on: the importance of the African Governance Architecture as a mechanism to: ensure the effective implementation of the African Union instruments on shared values, promote the culture of good governance, democracy, respect human rights, fight against impunity and corruption as well as accountability; to facilitate dialogue, cooperation and coordination among the African Union Organs on democratic governance and strengthen democratic institutions as well as the prevention of humanitarian crises.

This mechanism created in application of the African Charter of Democracy, Elections and Governance, adopted on January 30, 2007 and which came into force on February 15, 2012 is composed of five working groups:

- 1) Democracy and the elections ;
- 2) Governance, which includes issues of anti-corruption, decentralization, local governance, housing and urban development, civil service and administration;
- 3) Human Rights and Transitional Justice;
- 4) Constitutionalism and the rule of law, and;
- 5) Humanitarian Affairs.

The dialogue agreed on a greater commitment by the US Government to support efforts in identified and priority areas of this partnership, including:

- Capacity building of the AGA human resources platform and training of its staff;
- Technical Assistance through the exchange of good practices with appropriate US institutions;
- Support for the annual High Level Meeting on Governance Trends in Africa;

- Support for efforts to ratify and implement the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance as well as other relevant instruments on shared values.

With regard to accountability and the rule of law, the dialogue recognized the importance of legal and policy measures for the fight against impunity, the prohibition of unconstitutional changes of governments and tendencies to the confiscation of power, the fight against corruption and the promotion of the culture of constitutionalism.

Stakeholders emphasized on:

- 1) Research to assess the state of constitutionalism and the rule of law in Africa;
- 2) Development of tools and guidelines on constitutionalism and the rule of law;
- 3) Development of a commented database of African Constitutions accessible on the African Union website to enable follow-up of constitutional revisions in Member States;
- 4) Organization of information missions to member states in the framework of preventive diplomacy, to launch dialogue and consultation where there are risks of unconstitutional changes of government;
- 5) Capacity building activities of Member States  
In terms of human rights and transitional justice.

The dialogue acknowledged that the African Union has made the promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights one of its priorities. Also, the partnership with the United Nations, the European Union and the other institutions has strengthened the role of the African Union and the African human rights system and linked action on the Agenda for Action on integration and development in Africa. By dedicating successive years to human rights, African leadership has made human rights and the protection of vulnerable groups a priority.

The dialogue also recognized the importance of the program of deployment of human rights observers to countries in conflict to promote and protect human rights. The same is true for the African Transitional Justice Policy and the African Union's human rights policy and the cases that are initiatives to address the whole dimension of the human rights issues.

In terms of elections, it was noted that significant progress has been made in the conduct of democratic elections and that adherence to the rule of law is increasingly being reaffirmed during electoral processes on the continent. It was pointed out that elections are not a panacea for all governance deficits in Africa but remain crucial to continue to reflect the will of the people and to ensure effective and accountable democratic governance.

The dialogue finally recognized the importance of capacity building as essential to achieving the objectives pursued in the above mentioned areas of common interest.

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