Directorate of Information and Communication

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CIDO hosts an Interfaith Dialogue Forum (IFDF) Pre-Summit meeting under the theme "What Help is Faith?"

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 24 January 2018: The African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) in partnerships with KAICIID hosted an Interfaith Dialogue Forum (IFDF) Pre-Summit meeting under the theme "What Help is Faith?"

 This meeting brought together high-level representation from both partnering organizations, as well as two members of the IFDF Steering Committee, to discuss the rationale for the drive to include interfaith dialogue in the structure of the African Union, the progress made to establish a sustainable Forum, and what it is like to be part of the new structure.

While the Summit this year is concentrating on tackling corruption, the presentation outlined how the AU among many other global players is coming to recognize and seek to harness the powerful contributions of faith and faith actors in order to reach their goals. Speaking to an audience of around 40 heads of CSOs and NGOs and representatives of Member State foreign missions, Ambassador Jalel Chelba, Head of the Civil Society Division, emphasized that CIDO's constant priority is to make the organization people-centered. In line with the priorities of CIDO, and as a means to achieve Agenda 2063 goals, the AU-IFDF is envisioned to become the mechanism to sustainably weave the voices of religious actors and communities into the workings of the AU. KAICIID's Deputy Secretary General reaffirmed the Centre's long-term commitment to this endeavor, pledging support to the AU's initiative.

Having been dormant since 2010, AU-IDFD was convened anew under the AU-CIDO-KAICIID Memorandum of Understanding in November 2016. It gathered religious actors and experts from 33 African countries, who produced a Declaration of their intent to work on a wide range of pressing issues (hate speech, gender equality and countering violent extremism among others) and who elected a Steering Committee. The Steering Committee, consisting of 12 members tasked with representing the full variety of religious stakeholders in each of the five regions of Africa, will become the hands of the Forum, gathering information on interfaith relations, coordinating initiatives and disseminating information about AU initiatives internationally.

The Steering Committee have been industrious in their first year in office, twice gathering for three-day workshops organized by KAICIID and CIDO to compile the founding documents of the Forum and a strategy plan which will be finalized and put into action in 2018. The third African Union Interfaith Dialogue Forum is also anticipated in the fourth

quarter of this year, and it is hoped that it will draw even wider participation from AU Member States interested in seeing how their own interfaith institutions can become involved. "What do we want from you?" Pastor Zerihun Degu, General Secretary of the Inter-religious Council of Ethiopia and Steering Committee Member of the Eastern region, put to the AU Summit audience "Support your regional Steering Committee representative, come to the Forum and commit to the practice of interfaith dialogue to sustain lasting peace**.

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