

AFRICAN UNION

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## SOUTHERN AFRICA REGIONAL OFFICE

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### PRESS RELEASE

#### AU-SARO HOLDS SOCIAL SPORTS AHEAD OF THE 2018 AFRICA DAY CELEBRATION

**Lilongwe, Malawi, 11th May 2018-** Ahead of the Africa Day Celebration which falls on 25th May, 2018, the African Union Southern Africa Regional Office (AU-SARO), in collaboration with the Malawi Government and the African Group of Ambassadors in Malawi, on Saturday, 19th May 2018, organized Sports activities comprising Aerobics in which everyone interested participated and a social soccer match between Principal Secretaries of the government of Malawi and members of the Diplomatic Corps in Malawi at the Bingu National Stadium (BNS) in Lilongwe.



*H.E. Dr Isaac Munlo, Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (L) presenting the cup to H.E. Benedicto Mashiba, Tanzanian High Commissioner to Malawi, who was the coach for the Diplomats' team*

The colorful event saw the diplomats which composed of representatives of the Embassies from African nations and Embassies from nations outside Africa, grabbing the cup after scoring four goals to three against the Principal Secretaries in post-match penalties after holding each other to a 3 goals draw.

In addition to the overt objective of building working relationship between member states, development partners and the AU, the sports aimed to improve social integration of diplomats while creating awareness of the African Union and the theme of the year, "Winning the Fight against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa's Transformation."

Speaking in an interview with the press, the AU Regional Delegate to Southern Africa, Dr Leopold-Auguste Ngomo pointed out that the Day is celebrated to promote freedom, association and unity amongst Africans, and to honor the founding fathers of the organization and all Africans who fought for the freedom that Africans are enjoying today.



*The two teams pose for a group photograph after the game at Bingu National Stadium in Lilongwe, Malawi*



"Sports is one of the activities that bring that unity and pan-africanism spirit among African citizens. As they interact, they develop closeness and appreciate that we are one," explained Dr Ngomo, expressing satisfaction on the turnout of Africans and non-Africans at the event.

The Principal Secretary of Malawi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, H.E Dr Isaac Munlo applauded the AU-SARO for taking the initiative to bring together Africans through sports, which he described as a unique approach to enhancing networking among African citizens and a means to achieve the vision of pan-Africanism that the founding fathers of the OAU/AU laid the foundation.



*H.E. Thandiwe Dumbutshena, Zimbabwean High Commissioner to Malawi presenting an award to the Man of the match, Jose Maria Navaro*



*The winning team, diplomats in Malawi*

speaking on behalf of the Diplomatic Corps in Malawi, Zimbabwean High Commissioner, H.E. Thandiwe Dumbutshena said Africans apart from official meetings, need to meet socially to promote togetherness, peace and share ideas on how the nations can find ways of implementing policies initiated by African leaders.

The AU-SARO was established in 2001 as a representational office to develop and maintain constructive and productive relationship between the AU and Member States in SADC and COMESA regions. Its core functions are to assist Southern Africa in domestication of legal instruments and programs; alignment of AU and key programs partners; monitoring socio economic and political activities, ensuring that all challenges are tackled; and finally communicating and promoting AU programs and activities in Southern Africa region.

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