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**Opening Statement delivered by Ambassador Lazarous Kapambwe,  
Advisor to the AU Chairperson presented to the ECOSOCC  
Sensitization and Motivation Campaign, Lusaka, Zambia, 12 August  
2014**

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Your Excellency, the Minister for Community Development, Republic of Zambia  
Your Excellency, the Assistant Secretary-General (Programs) COMESA  
Colleagues from the AU and COMESA  
Members of the African Diplomatic Corps  
Distinguished Delegates of Civil Society  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me distinct pleasure to be back here in Zambia today for this illustrious event. Our presence here today celebrates the people-oriented impetus of the African Union. The Constitutive Act of the Union stresses that it will be a partnership between governments and all segments of civil society. To uphold this cardinal principle, the Union provided for the establishment of a unique organ, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union, a civil society organ that will participate directly in the policy making process of the AU.

The Organ is composed of about 150 members including two representatives for each of the 54 Member States, 5 continental representatives, 10 sub-regional representatives, 20 members of the Diaspora and 6 nominated representatives for special interest groups. The role and functions of the organ and its importance will be highlighted subsequently by a former member of the ECOSOCC General Assembly, its highest internal Organ. Suffices to say it is a body elected by civil society and representing civil society people for the people by the people.

ECOSOCC carries the principle of democracy to its highest level. It brings the grassroots to the portals of decision making where its own elected leaders interface directly with political leaders elected through universal suffrage to assume responsibility for the integration and development project of the continent.

We are here today to ensure that these democratic principles are implemented to the fullest. ECOSOCC has had two preceding parliaments. First, was the Interim Assembly from 2004-2007 under the leadership of the late venerable Wangari Maathai, our much acclaimed Nobel Laureate. She provided a solid foundation for the development of the Organ and ensure its recognition with both continental, regional and global levels, Prof. Maathai set the pace for the rising profile of ECOSOCC and adroitly led the process that put in place the 1<sup>st</sup> Permanent General Assembly that functioned between 2008-2013.

The Executive Council of the Union then directed the Commission of the Union to put in motion the process of electing the second General Assembly of ECOSOCC. The Commission began the process in earnest but was constrained from composing the ECOSOCC between 2012 and early 2014 because it could not get a quorum of eligible candidates for this purpose. The Commission then reported back to the Assembly and put forward a series of option and recommendations for moving forward. The precise and substantive details will be provided in a thematic presentation that will preface our interactive question and answer session.

What is important for us at this point is that the Executive Council through its Decision EX.CL/849(XXV) directed among other things that the Commission should undertake a sensitization and motivation campaign that will mobilize African Civil Society organizations to participate in the elections. Subsequently, the ECOSOCC Assembly must be composed by November or December 2014, certainly before the end of the year. The Commission is focusing the campaign on states that do not have sufficient number of eligible candidates for the elections.

This is the enterprise that we begin here in Zambia today and which will subsequently cover all the five regions of the continent.

It is remarkable to observe that this exercise brings the partnership of governments and civil society to new heights. It is an exercise in which governments of the Union through its highest policy organs, the Executive Council and Assembly is mobilizing the civil society to organize itself for leadership of the continent and to share power and responsibility with governments. The elections in which we are motivating you to participate in is solely an election for and by civil society. Civil society will be the electors and elected. Governments and the Union organs will be observers with legal representatives as the electoral commission. Thus, the fundamental process of states

elections are now turned on its head, you will be forming a government and states will be the observers. The shoe is now on the foot and the challenge to civil society is to now do as you say. Show us off. Demonstrate those integrity and democratic principles that you reproach states for.

It is also important that those whom you have elected will share responsibility for policy and decision-making and guidance of the continent and must work with other stakeholders. This is the challenge and responsibility that we have come to ask you to take.

In this process, we wish to thank the government and people of Zambia for hosting this meeting and our sister organization, COMESA, for sharing the platform and responsibility of canvassing with us as a pillar of the AU. The notice we gave COMESA was short but they are here with us in the spirit of integration and the people-centred craving of our continent. We want to thank and salute them and to urge them to work closely together in partnership with ECOSOCC and our Citizenship Directorate (CIDO) to cement this enterprise.

Our greatest honor lies in the fellowship with the civil society community. We see the presence of the African Civil Society and the media as a clarion response to the call for service. Africa is “all of us together” and we are pledged to live, serve and die in the service of the motherland.

I thank you.