

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

---

**Opening Statement delivered by Ambassador Lazarous  
Kapambwe, Advisor to the AU Chairperson to Namibian Civil  
Society Organizations at the ECOSOCC Sensitization and  
Motivation Campaign in Hotel Safari  
Windhoek, Namibia, 20 August 2014**

**Opening Statement delivered by Ambassador Lazarous Kapambwe,  
Advisor to the AU Chairperson to Namibian Civil Society  
Organizations at the ECOSOCC Sensitization and Motivation  
Campaign in Hotel Safari  
Windhoek, Namibia, 20 August 2014**

Distinguished Delegates of the Namibian Civil Society Organizations,  
Colleagues from the AU,  
Participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with honour and great delight that I am addressing this august gathering of the Namibian Civil Society Community in Windhoek, Namibia, today. The journey that brought us here began in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Executive Council of the African Union which adopted Decision, EX.CL/Dec.849(XXV) on the process of ECOSOCC elections.

Our leaders had received a progress report from the AU Commission on the elections which indicated that processes of election into the 2<sup>nd</sup> ECOSOCC General Assembly was constrained by lack of eligible candidates in several Member States of the Union. The Commission then outlined various options for overcoming this hurdle and requested that the executive Organs make an appropriate decision on the way forward.

Our leaders took necessary decisions that went beyond the choices presented to them. They directed the Commission to ensure that it worked constructively with African civil society groups to facilitate the establishment of the next ECOSOCC General Assembly before the end of 2014. They also decided that the Commission should undertake a sensitization and motivation campaign that focuses on states and regions in which there were insufficient candidates for the election. The details of this decision and implications will be elaborated subsequently by the responsible Department of the AU Commission, the Citizens and Diaspora Organisations Directorate (CIDO). Suffice to emphasize here that our leaders saw the solution as one that must put in practice the cardinal provision of the Constitutive Act of the Union which stipulated that

Governments and institutions of the Union were required to partner with civil society in implementing the principles of the fundamental law of the Organization, hence the need to activate ECOSOCC.

This is the rationale behind the continent-wide campaign of the African Union Commission to invite and encourage African Civil Society Organizations to participate in the ECOSOCC elections. Our presence here is not simply designed to foster interest in the purposes of electioneering. Our intentions are far broader. We want African civil societies to buy into ECOSOCC and make it their own so that the framework of partnership that would support the integration and development project of our continent would be truly people-centred and people-driven.

As the then Chairperson of the African Union, President Jakaya Kikwete has observed at the launching of the 1<sup>st</sup> Permanent General Assembly of ECOSOCC in Tanzania, in September 2008, the African Union ECOSOCC is a unique institution that has no existing parallel. It is one that provides civil society with direct presence at the portal of decision-making. This Organ is also one elected by civil society and managed by civil society. Yet it is one in which civil society shares privilege, power and responsibility in active interaction with other stakeholders in the African policy processes.

ECOSOCC provides a barometer for assessing the state of the health of African civil society and the overall development on the continent. It is an Organ that embraces the active involvement of every non-state actor in the continent in policy-making. The ECOSOCC Assembly represents civil society but does not replace it.

This is a message that we have been spreading across our previous stops in Southern Africa particularly in Zambia and Zimbabwe where it was very well received. It is a message that we have brought to you as well.

Our mission to Namibia is all the more significant in that Namibia was not represented in the last ECOSOCC General Assembly. This is a state of affairs that the Namibian civil society should not allow to happen again, given the importance that Namibia attaches to the African Union and the role that the organization played in the independence of Namibia.

If there is one lesson we learned in the struggles from slavery, colonisation, apartheid and subjugation, it is that victory comes from unity and involvement. The African

Renaissance that we seek, the restoration of dignity that we deserve and the upliftment of the lives of our people that we are entrusted to bring about cannot be achieved by anyone of us standing on the sidelines. To do so is to dishonour the memory of our fathers and forbearers, many of who laid down their lives to give us the platform for independence, reconstruction and development. Africa needs all her children in government and in civil society. It is in this spirit that we are calling on you all to participate in ECOSOCC and the affairs of the African Union. This is a call to duty. Your continent needs you and there is no greater honour no greater service than to answer the call of duty.

I thank you all.