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**Opening Statement delivered by Ambassador Lazarous Kapambwe,  
Advisor to the AU Chairperson, to Lesotho Civil Society  
Organizations at the ECOSOCC Sensitization and Motivation  
Campaign held in Lehakoe Club  
Maseru, Lesotho  
25 August 2014**

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Your Excellency, the Principal Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Lesotho  
Members of the African Diplomatic Corps  
The Director, Lesotho Council of NGOs  
Colleagues from the AU

Distinguished Delegates of Lesotho Civil Society Organizations  
Invited Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to be in a position to address you all here in Maseru, Lesotho today. This is the fourth leg of our Southern African Countries to invite and encourage African civil society organizations to register and participate in the ECOSOCC elections process. It is the crowning stage of the first step of the African Union efforts to ensure that all Member States across the regions are fully represented in Economic, Social and Cultural Council, which serves as the civil society parliament of the African Union.

We are privileged to be here in Lesotho on this mission and I can assure you there is no other place we would wish to be on assignment from our leaders other than here today. Since we arrived on your shores on Friday, 22 August 2014, we have partaken of your hospitality. The success and fulfillment of the purpose of our mission has been engendered by fruitful cooperation on the part of the Lesotho Government through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the civil society community through the Lesotho Council of NGOs. The enthusiasm and vigorous support on both sides presages the purpose and intent of the Constitutive Act of the African Union. It offers a model of the partnership between governments and civil society that the African Union is pledged to achieve.

Our mission here, as succinctly slated, in the Opening Address of the Honourable Principal Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Lesotho, is to faithfully implement the Decisions of the Leaders of the African continent. The presentation of the Principal Secretary traced the history and development of ECOSOCC and the context in which the Decision was taken. The objective was so eloquently stated that there is no need and no profit in my repetition of the same.

I can only add that in the course of this sensitization exercise, my colleagues from the AU and ECOSOCC will explain the procedures and processes of the ECOSOCC election, the eligibility criteria and the timelines set for the exercise to enable Lesotho NGOs rise up to the mandate and challenge that has been so eloquently captured by the Honourable Principal Secretary. In the same vein, Mr. Chilengi, a member of the 1<sup>st</sup> ECOSOCC Permanent General Assembly will underline the importance of the role and functions of ECOSOCC and the achievement and challenges it encountered in its phases of existence. The purpose is to make the Lesotho CSO community appreciative of their duties and responsibilities in ECOSOCC so that it can organize itself for co-responsibility of the leadership of the continent as required in the ECOSOCC Statutes.

I urge all CSO representatives present here to heed the wise counsel of the Principal Secretary for Foreign Affairs and respond positively and constructively to the entreaties of our leaders as expressed through the AU Summit Decision. In order for our continent to take its rightful place in the world, Government and all segments of civil society must organize themselves appropriately to share responsibility for the development of our beloved continent. Too often in the past, African civil society were not fully taken into account in mapping the way forward. In this ECOSOCC process, they have been charged with co-responsibility. It is a challenge that the African Union and its Commission would urge us all to embrace in the interest of the future of Africa, our children and posterity.

Thank you.