

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
KENYA AND  
MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE AFRICAN UNION,  
HE AMINA ABDALLAH**

**ON THE OCCASION OF**

**THE LAUNCH OF THE 2<sup>ND</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE ECONOMIC,  
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COUNCIL OF THE AFRICAN UNION (ECOSOCC),  
NAIROBI, KENYA,**

**22 DECEMBER 2014.**

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BY THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND  
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THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE AFRICAN UNION,  
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**Excellency, Mr. Erastus Mwencha, the Deputy Chairperson of the  
AU Commission,**

**Honorable Presiding Officer of ECOSOCC and Members of the  
2<sup>nd</sup> ECOSOCC Bureau**

**Distinguished Delegates from the African Civil Society  
Community,**

**Invited Guests,**

**Members of the Press Corps and the Fourth Estate,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

To begin with, I am happy to welcome you all to our beautiful capital city of Nairobi, Kenya. We, the Kenyan people, take a great deal of pride in the comfort of our city and its habit of serving as a second home for All African people. We are very pleased therefore that Kenya has been chosen by the African Union to play host to this unique event that marks the foundation of the Second General Assembly of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union (ECOSOCC).

The Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union (ECOSOCC) is an important Organ of the African Union. The design of the Constitutive Act of the Union was to establish a people-centered community based on partnership between governments and all segments of civil society. Various instruments were created for this purpose but the main vehicle was ECOSOCC, a civil society parliament that would participate directly in the policy decision-making and contribute effectively to the policy making process. This ECOSOCC that was created by the African Union was clearly unique among its counterparts in international organizations.

**Excellences,  
Distinguished Participants,**

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Kenyan people take pride in the knowledge that the African Civil Society chose Professor Wangari Maathai, our late Nobel Laureate, in 2005 as the pioneer leader for this enterprise. Her leadership gave prestige and focus to the aims and objectives of ECOSOCC and endowed it with constructive purpose. The Interim ECOSOCC under the illustrious Wangari Matthau paved was for the first Permanent General Assembly that was launched in Dar Es 'Salaam, Tanzania in September 2008 under the auspices of President Jakaya Kikwete, the President of Tanzania and then Chairperson of the African Union.

The ECOSOCC Assembly that we are launching here today is the successor of that First Permanent General Assembly. The launch of this Assembly will see ECOSOCC approaching a full decade of its existence and thereby marks its coming of age. This therefore, is time for reflection, rededication and renewal of purpose. It is also a time to take stock of achievements, challenges, hopes and promises, what has been done, what needs to be done and what should be done.

The establishment of ECOSOCC in the AU family of organs has had a serious impact on the progressive development of the Organization. It has brought the influence of civil society to bear on the policy discourse and shaped the character of state-society relations within the larger African society. This is not to suggest that the impact has been all-positive. There have been distinctive drawbacks. Like all new institutions, divisions and internal conflicts and management problems that did not permit the Organ to achieve as much as it could have done often plagued ECOSOCC in the period of the First Permanent General Assembly. Even so, the Organ in its wider period of existence has played a positive role in harnessing civil society contribution to the development of policy processes such the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Convention, the African Governance Architecture and Human Rights Strategy and the framework of Africa's international partnerships.

The development of ECOSOCC system has itself also provided objective lessons for the development of the wider AU processes. The implementation of the decision of the Executive Council in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in which we decided that the Commission should carry out a continent wide sensitization process for three months to increase the pool of candidates for ECOSOCC has served as an object lesson for the wider Union in terms of image building and the lessons gathered must be applied to serve the entire Union as a whole.

As the Union focuses on the requirement of implementing Africa's development program in the next 50 years through Agenda 2063, it must apply the ECOSOCC formula on the sensitization program and ensure that leadership of the continent carries the ordinary African along in the design, execution and the monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs. ECOSOCC, the civil society parliament of

the Union, must be used as a vanguard for this process and should take a lead role in marketing the hopes, promises, policies and programs of the Union and mobilizing the wider African society to serve as the foot soldiers for the progressive development of the continent.

**Honorable Presiding Officer,  
Members of the Bureau and 2<sup>nd</sup> ECOSOCC Assembly**

The situation sets the pace for the expectations of the Union and the larger African Society from you as the work of your Assembly begins in earnest. The Union and its people expect you all to work sincerely and constructively in the interests of the African people. We certainly expect that you will see the challenge of the trust that the African people have bestowed on you as that of service to the people. You must not see it as opportunities for personal aggrandizement or for ensuring pecuniary or other sordid advantages. You must avoid divisions and internal conflicts that would distract you from the objectives for which ECOSOCC has been established. Internal differences are unavoidable but you must learn to manage them in the spirit of compromise and the need to impact positively on policy decision-making.

In doing this, you must be guided by the principles, aims and objectives of the Constitutive Act of the Union, the ECOSOCC Statutes and the Oath of Allegiance that you have sworn to the Union. The policy advise that you give to the Union must be internally driven. You must serve the African people in a sincere and authentic manner. The ECOSOCC Assembly also has to work constructively with other organs of the Union and interact with them in a positive manner. Policymaking is an interactive process that is not based on mere dissent or constant criticisms. These too are part of the process but the greater work is working with various constituencies to hammer out practical solutions to practical problems.

I wish to assure the new ECOSOCC Assembly that all organs of the Union and the African will work to assist and support your work in this regard. The ECOSOCC Assembly can therefore count on all of us as you hit the ground running and develop your priorities, programs and activities accordingly.

**Excellences,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Finally, the Commission of the African Union and the Secretariat in the Citizens and the Diaspora Directorate must be commended for faithfully carrying out the directives of the Executive Council and Assembly of the Union that a new ECOSOCC Assembly must be inaugurated before the end of the year 2014. The Decision that was taken in Malabo in July 2014 set criteria and defined targets and imposed strict deadlines. Several observers may have seen it then as tasking and perhaps impossible but the Commission has delivered on the

promise. I wish to congratulate the Commission and its Chairperson for the planning, sense of dedication and discipline that has made this possible. It is a framework that we recommend to the new ECOSOCC Assembly and its leadership as they begin their work for the continent. I wish the 2<sup>nd</sup> ECOSOCC Assembly the best of luck in this undertaking.

**Long Live the African Union.**