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**OPENING STATEMENT BY  
HE MR ERASTUS MWENCHA,  
THE DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF  
THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**ON THE OCCASION OF**

**THE LAUNCH OF THE 2<sup>ND</sup> ECOSOCC GENERAL ASSEMBLY,  
NAIROBI, KENYA, 22 DECEMBER 2014**

**OPENING STATEMENT BY HE MR ERASTUS MWENCHA, THE DEPUTY  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION.**

**Excellency, Ms. Amina Abdallah, the Foreign Minister of the  
Republic of Kenya and Member of the Executive Council of the  
African Union.**

**The Presiding Officer of ECOSOCC,**

**Members of the Bureau of ECOSOCC**

**Members of the ECOSOCC General Assembly**

**Distinguished Representatives of African Civil Society,**

**Members of the Press Corps,**

**Participants,**

**Invited Guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the inauguration of the Second Permanent General Assembly of ECOSOCC. This is a very important day for the African Union, the African civil society and our continent in general. It marks the transition of the ECOSOCC process as it grows and matures with age. About six years ago in 2008 in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, I represented the AU Commission at the official ceremony that marked the inauguration of the First ECOSOCC Assembly at an official ceremony in which President Kikwete, the President of Tanzania presided. I am now here for the inauguration of the Second Assembly that is taking place here in Kenya, my home state.

I am happy to have been present at the creation and to be also present at the development and it is my hope and aspiration to have ECOSOCC grow from strength to strength as it develops even further. I learnt that the elections that preceded this inauguration have been conducted in a free and fair atmosphere and with a spirit of collegiality. The result has been accepted by all in a wonderful atmosphere in which there are no winners and losers. The Second ECOSOCC General Assembly is therefore beginning on a strong foundation that gives us the utmost assurance that it would perform excellently and deliver on the promises that inspired the founders of the African Union to create this unique Organ as a

bridge for effective partnership between governments and all segments of civil society in Africa.

**Excellences,  
The Presiding Officer,  
Members of the Bureau,  
Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is important at this stage to retrace the road that led us here to this unique occasion. The tenure of the Second ECOSOCC Assembly expired in September 2012 and the Summit of the African Union that met in June/ July of that year directed the Commission to carry out the next elections on the due date of September 2016.

The Commission then established an Interdepartmental Committee made up of the various relevant departments to verify and appraise the eligibility of the candidates in accordance with the provisions of the ECOSOCC Statutes. The aim was to ensure that the consequent elections would be held in September 2012.

This proved difficult and impossible because though there were several applications for membership, the outcome of the verification exercise did not produce a sufficient pool of candidates required for the elections. Thus the Commission continued to extend the call for applications for elections into the Second ECOSOCC Permanent General Assembly until June/ July 2014 when it submitted a progress report on the exercise to the Executive Council of the African Union in Malabo and suggested a roadmap on the way forward.

**Excellences,  
The Presiding Officer,  
Members of the ECOSOCC General Assembly,  
Participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen**

The progress report submitted by the Commission to the Malabo Summit in July 2014 proposed four options for the consideration of the Executive Council on the way forward. The first was to relax the requirements for eligibility for Membership as contained in the ECOSOCC Statutes with a particular focus on lowering the criteria that 50 per cent of the resources of an Organization must come from internal African sources.

The second was to carry out a three months sensitization program with a view to mobilizing a sufficient pool of candidates to carry out the elections for a Permanent General Assembly with four-year tenure. The third was to establish

an interim ECOSOCC Assembly for two years with whatever number of candidates those are available. The fourth was to carry out the sensitization exercise and if the numbers were sufficient to establish a Permanent General Assembly for four years and if the numbers were still not sufficient to establish an Interim Assembly for two years.

The Executive Council of the African Union accepted the fourth option through its decision EX/CL 849 (XXV) of July 2014. Council was specific that it would not lower the eligibility criteria because it is the measure of authenticity of Africa civil society organizations. Council gave a strict three months deadline for the sensitization and motivation campaign and directed that an ECOSOCC Assembly whether interim or Permanent should be established before the end of 2014.

## **Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Commission approached this task with due diligence. It developed and approved a roadmap that complied with the strict deadline, defined targets and timelines imposed by Council. The ECOSOCC Sensitization and Motivation Campaign was carried out across the five regions of the continent in the period between August and early October 2014. It was a very successful campaign that has set the pace for AU image building and the mobilization of the African grassroots in support of the processes of integration and development of the continent. The positive effect of this campaign has been widely acknowledged and sets precedence for the wider AU family.

This was followed by close scrutiny, verification and appraisal of the eligibility of candidates according to the requirements stipulated in the ECOSOCC Statutes. Elections into the ECOSOCC General Assembly were then conducted in the immediate period preceding this inauguration from 18-22 December 2014. At the end of the exercise 64 candidates were elected into the ECOSOCC General Assembly, which together with the six nominated Members of the Commission amounts to about 70 foundation Members of the new ECOSOCC Assembly. Thus what we are establishing today would be a Second Permanent General Assembly of ECOSOCC.

It is also on record that the number of Members that would begin the work of the Second General Assembly is above those that began the work of the First ECOSOCC General Assembly. At her meetings with the former African Heads of States and a section of the Executive Council of the Union last weekend in South Africa, the Chairperson of the Commission, Her Excellency Dr. Nkozasana Dlamini Zuma had promised the Commission was faithfully implementing the task and would report on the establishment of a Permanent General ECOSOCC Assembly at the 2015 January Summit. Her Excellency and the Commission under her leadership are now delivering on that promise. What we said we shall do is what we have now done.

**Excellences,  
The Presiding Officer of ECOSOC,  
Members of the Bureau and Assembly of ECOSOCC,  
Participants,  
Invited Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen**

I cannot end our presentation without thanking the foot soldiers of the Commission of the African Union that were part and parcel of this effort under the guidance of the Chairperson and the Commission. I wish to acknowledge the work of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Verification and appraisal of the candidates for ECOSOCC elections that embraces various segments of the Commission, the Office of the Legal Counsel for its various contributions, and the various units and arms of the Commission that have worked together strenuously to implement the decision of the Summit. Above all, I must acknowledge the excellent work of the Secretariat in CIDO under the leadership of the Director that has shaped this enterprise.

Now that the Commission has set the foundation, the main challenge of the Second ECOSOCC Permanent Assembly that would be led by Mr. Joseph Chilengi and the ECOSOCC Bureau is to deliver on the promise of ECOSOCC. In doing this, they must learn from the challenges of the preceding ECOSOCC Assembly and the illustrious example of the Interim ECOSOCC. ECOSOCC needs to operationalize its cluster Committees and play its desired role in the policy making process.

It must be an agent of progressive change in the AU system as well as a practical tool for popularizing AU activities and program while harnessing the contributions of the Ordinary African citizens in the affairs of the AU. ECOSOCC must play a critical role in advancing Agenda 2063. It must also lead by example and not fall prey to those weaknesses that it criticizes our governments for.

The African Union Commission assures you of its support and cooperation in this enterprise.

**I thank you all**