

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA P. O. Box 3243 Telephone: 251-115-517 700 Fax: 251-115-517844 Website : www.au.int

**Address by Mr. Joseph Chilengi, the Presiding Officer,
Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African
Union (ECOSOCC) to the Pan-African Parliament
Regional Parliamentary Meeting
for the Promotion of the Ratification, Domestication and
Implementation of AU Legal Instruments
29 April – 1 May 2015**

**Address by Mr. Joseph Chilengi, the Presiding Officer, Economic,
Social and Cultural Council of the African Union (ECOSOCC) to the
Pan-African Parliament Regional Parliamentary Meeting
for the Promotion of the Ratification, Domestication and
Implementation of AU Legal Instruments
29 April – 1 May 2015**

To begin with, I would like to thank the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) for extending the invitation to ECOSOCC to be part of this meeting. I would like, in particular, to express our appreciation to H.E. Bethel Amadi, the President of PAP for this hand of fellowship. The invitation underlines the need for AU organs to work together as a family to drive the integration and development agenda of our beloved African continent. The AU-ECOSOCC shares this spirit and the 2nd Permanent ECOSOCC General Assembly that I serve as the Presiding Officer would do all it can to consolidate and develop meaningful relations with the Pan-African Parliament in the service of Africa, our motherland.

I am gratified also that this meeting is taking place in Nigeria. Nigeria, through its recent elections, has provided a lesson on how to lead by example. Several prophets in the Western World and elsewhere predicted doom and chaos as a tributary of the just concluded elections in Nigeria. Nigeria proved them wrong as it always does. In so doing, it provided an object lesson in governance and democracy to “those who know Africa more than we know ourselves.” Nigeria taught everyone else that its democracy is nurtured and homegrown and propelled by its own needs and requirements. We are happy to be here because Nigeria is inherently Pan-African in its actions and inspiration. It welcomes, encourages and treat all Africans as its own citizens.

The objective of this meeting is the promotion of the ratification, domestication and implementation of AU legal instruments, including the Protocol of the Constitutive Act of the Union, the African Governance Platform as well as the Protocol to the African Charter of Human and People’s Rights. ECOSOCC perceives this focus as relevant to ensure that the Union and its Members are places where the rule of law and due process are respected. Significantly also, it should be a continent in which regard for laws provide protection to the Ordinary people against arbitrariness, persecution and indignity.

It is this context that the last segment of the projected discussion stresses dialogue with civil society organizations to ensure that the Africa we have and the Africa we want will be people-centric and people-driven. ECOSOCC as an organ of the African Union was specifically created to inspire and consolidate this agenda. Thus it is important that we are an essential component of the African conversations in this regard.

As we proceed to engage in these conversations, I would like to offer some counsel on the way forward. First, the conversations we intend to have must be free and frank on these matters. We have to measure how far we have come and how far we need to go and appropriate strategies and instruments for moving forward.

Secondly, our strategies must be erected on a stakeholder platform which recognizes what has to be done at different levels by different actors as well as how and in which way the various actors have to act in order to complement each other. There are things that must be done by our organizations at regional and sub-regional levels and others at the level of Member States, parliaments and civil society. Premium must be placed on defining roles for each actor as well as in defining how the activities of each actor can cement a wider objective that interrelates the different elements. Dialogue must pave way for precise role definition and concrete behavior.

Finally, in order to achieve each and all of these objectives, there is a need to make the African Union more accessible to the people. ECOSOCC carried out a continental sensitization program all over the African continent as part of the preparations for the recent elections into its 2nd Permanent General Assembly. We discovered in the process that the African Union is still very remote from the people it seeks to integrate. Its activities and programs are not widely disseminated. The decisions of the Assembly of Heads of States are not widely known in individual Member States.

This meeting highlights the need to change the situation so that African through the African Union can achieve auto-centred development. As part of this process, we in ECOSOCC propose to work with the Pan-African Parliament to ensure that each country's parliament in the Union assign one week as an

African Union parliamentary week to discuss the activities and program of the African Union. Member States allocate hard –earned resources to the Union. They need to assign a week of their proceedings to see what it is doing and whether it is cost-efficient. This process would also review its legal instruments and establish procedures for assimilating them into national contexts. The promotion and ratification of AU legal instruments would be an integral part of the exercise to make the AU an African people’s commonwealth.

On its own part, ECOSOCC would be establishing national ECOSOCC national ECOSOCC Chapters as grassroots apparatus for bringing the AU closer to and in alignment with the African people.

We look forward to working closely with the Pan-African parliament in this regard.

I thank you.