



STATEMENT
BY
HER EXCELLENCY MRS JULIA DOLLY JOINER
COMMISSIONER FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION
AT
THE OPENING OF
THE 2nd AFRICAN UNION CONTINENTAL ELECTION
MANAGEMENT BODIES MEETING

11TH June 2012 – LUSAKA, ZAMBIA

Your Honour Dr Guy Scott, Vice President of the Government of the Republic of Zambia,
Madam Justice Irene Mambilima, Chairperson of the Electoral Commission of Zambia, our esteemed hostess and Chairperson of this Opening Session
Senior officials of the Government of the Republic of Zambia
Chairpersons and Members of Electoral Management Bodies and Electoral Commissions from African Union Member States
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps
Distinguished Guests
Acting Director of Political Affairs and Staff of the African Union Commission
All other protocols most respectfully observed,

As I warmly welcome you all to this Continental Meeting of Election Management Bodies in Africa, I would want at the outset and on behalf of the African Union Commission, to express most sincere appreciation to His Honour the Vice President and through him to the Government and people of the Republic of Zambia for the warm welcome and truly African hospitality that has been accorded to all participants and officials of the African Union Commission since our arrival in this beautiful city of Lusaka. Your presence here today Hon. Vice President, after the holding of peaceful and successful democratic elections in this country in September last year, is a further reflection of the governance constancy in Zambia and of the commitment of this country and her peoples to the African Union and to matters particularly relating to its evolving Governance Agenda. We remain most grateful for the dedication demonstrated and would seize the opportunity to also commend the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission of Zambia for her sterling work and for the graciousness in accepting to host this Meeting.

We are gathered today Your Honour, in the presence of representatives of the African Union Organs, the Regional Economic Communities, our partners from the international community and other stakeholders active in the terrain of governance in the Continent. To all of them, I say a big THANK YOU for responding favourably to our invitation. The invaluable support you continue to give to our work is duly recognized and I must admit, has continued to inspire us as we move forward amidst the realities of limited resources and capacity for positive and meaningful actions.

To our distinguished Chairpersons and Members of Electoral Management Bodies and Electoral Commissions of AU Member States, your significant turnout here today is very encouraging and we at the African Union Commission are most humbled by this. No doubt, it serves to indicate a determined willingness to work as a collective and reflects a commitment towards networking in an open and engaging manner with all stakeholders in the interest of Africa's development and the advancement of her Peoples.

Our meeting, Your Honour, Distinguished Guests, is the second in the series of continental consultations between the African Union Commission and the top echelons of Election Management Bodies (EMBs) in the Continent, aimed at establishing a platform for interactions and exchanges, sharing of experiences and networking among

the EMBs and identifying best practices in the conduct and management of elections in African Union Member States. It is also an opportunity to provide practical information to the EMBs on the Programmes of the African Union Commission towards supporting and assisting in the effective and successful execution of their mandates in addition to undertaking periodic assessment of the elections observation missions that have been conducted by the African Union.

Your Honour

Distinguished Guests

Dear Participants,

Africa's vision of a unified prosperous Continent driven by its own peoples is anchored on the establishment of an environment of sustainable peace and security. It goes without saying that an environment of peace and security cannot be achieved and sustained without democracy and good governance which in themselves are premised on free, fair and credible elections. Democracy therefore, and by extension democratic elections, remains central to each of the strategic pillars of Peace, Security, Integration and Sustainable Development on which the vision of the African Union is grounded.

The transformation of the OAU into the AU created a momentum in advancing continental integration through policy and programme convergence and issues of governance and democracy, as shared values of the Union, have been given much prominence in the process. Governance, for the AU is premised on ownership and collective responsibility as enshrined in the Constitutive Act of the African Union (Article 4 h) in accordance with which no one Member State should be indifferent to the looming challenges in another Member State. Indeed, one could argue that it is that logic of collective responsibility, which has served as the fundamental rationale for this gathering.

While it must be acknowledged that there are still gaps, given the many complex and difficult realities across our vast and diverse Continent, it is also true that through individual and collective efforts, much progress has been made in establishing the foundations for anchoring Democratic Governance on the integration agenda. The **OAU/AU Declaration on Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa**, the **African Union Guidelines for Election Observation and Monitoring Missions** and the **African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance** are some of the clearest and most decisive indicators of the shift from indifference towards shared and collective responsibility. Together they represent a collective vision and basis to espouse our shared values in the broad terrain of Governance, and also, very importantly, provide us with a solid foundation on which the AU could enhance its capacity to prevent and respond to the structural causes of conflicts in our Continent.

Your Honour

Distinguished Participants,

As we meet here in Lusaka, it is gratifying to note that following the Accra Meeting in December 2009, the Democracy and Electoral Assistance Unit of the African Union Commission has taken long strides towards meeting the demands and

recommendations formulated by that first continental forum. In the area of capacity building for EMBs, the Department of Political Affairs successfully negotiated a Joint Activity Programme (JAP) with International IDEA in 2009 to provide electoral training for African EMBs at the regional level using the BRIDGE Training Curriculum. Between 2009 and now, over 40 EMBs have been trained in different areas of election management using BRIDGE. The Commission has since last year further expanded the BRIDGE Capacity Building Programme to the national level where BRIDGE sessions are now conducted for specific EMBs in their own country upon request to the African Union Commission. This scheme was piloted in December 2011 with the training organized for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) of Nigeria in Abuja, and plans are underway for national BRIDGE workshops in seven (7) African countries for this year.

In the area of promoting interactions and experience-sharing among EMBs, the continental meeting has become a regular feature on the Calendar of Programmes and Activities of the African Union. This year's meeting will in addition to the aforementioned, establish formal mechanisms for interaction between the EMBs and the African Union Commission for activities that will contribute to a more efficient management of the national electoral process. Various programmes aimed at deepening the relationship between the EMBs and the African Union Commission have also been launched, including the creation of an EMB Master Database with complete structural and organic data on all EMBs in Africa, the preparations for the publication of the first EMB Reference Book in the African Union that will serve both as institutional and academic reference. Participants will be apprised about the details of these initiatives in the various presentations scheduled during the Meeting.

As a contribution to the wider AU response to the spate of post-electoral violence that has rocked some parts of the Continent in the recent past, a Programme of Post-election Audit Workshops in each of the sub-regions of the Continent has been introduced. The objective is to take stock of the performance of the EMBs in the conducted election exercises so as to assess success or otherwise, gain first-hand knowledge and insight into the challenges faced with the view to identifying areas where assistance is needed to improve the conduct of elections. The first Workshop will be piloted this year alongside the newly developed Electoral Risk Management Tool, a pre-election assessment mechanism designed to provide early warning on electoral flash points to both the national institutions and the international community involved in the management of, as well as support for elections.

Your Honour

Distinguished Guests

Dear Participants,

In looking ahead, it should be said that with the entry into force of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance on the 15th February 2012 following its ratification by the requisite number of Member States, the onerous challenge facing all of us now is to ensure that the agreed values, norms, and principles are not only

respected but domesticated and implemented. The Department of Political Affairs of the African Union Commission is well poised to pursue the process of promoting implementation of the Charter within Member States of the Union and to create the interface between the AUC and Member States in ensuring compliance with the norms contained in the provisions of the Charter. In this regard, your cooperation as leaders of elections management bodies cannot be overemphasized.

Let me before I conclude also say that as representatives of elections management bodies, the African Union places a lot of hope on you in the promotion of democracy and democratic elections in the Continent. Elections constitute a very critical process in the political transformation and evolution of any nation in our modern day world as they provide the basis for authority to govern in a democratic state. Experience has shown that a failed election is far more expensive than conducting a transparent, well organized electoral process. It is therefore important that the management of the electoral process be scrupulous in order to avoid the known consequences of failed elections which are conflict-prone, with resultant possible loss of lives and precious material resources not to talk of wastage of meager financial resources.

The African Union is committed to the promotion of democracy and democratic elections in the Continent as enablers for development and progress for our peoples, and in this respect, the election management bodies represent our most valued partners. I remain very optimistic that over the coming three days, our resolve to deliver on our collective but differentiated responsibilities will be reinforced and our capacities strengthened. I am also confident that with you as our partners in the building and promotion of democracy through the efficient conduct of free, fair and credible elections, the goal of making Africa a truly democratic Continent can and will certainly be achieved.

On that optimistic note, I thank you for your attention and by God's grace, wish this Second African Union Meeting of Election Management Bodies a successful outcome.