



**Remarks by Ms. Shumbana Karume on the occasion of the Opening of
BRIDGE Training in Dar Es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania on Voter
Registration
21 – 25 July 2014**

**Distinguished Chairperson, National Electoral Commission, Hon Justice
(Rtd) Damian Lubuva,**

BRIDGE Facilitators,

Colleagues from the Africa Union and the Media,

Participants,

Good morning!

Let me first of all welcome all of you on behalf of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Dr. Aisha Abdullahi who would have liked to be here to open this training herself, but for her busy schedule.

I am obviously happy to be here today in Dar Es Salaam to open this BRIDGE Training, the second in the United Republic of Tanzania, after a similar training in Zanzibar on Gender and Elections which was held from 7 to 11 July. Today, we are here to open yet training on Voter Registration.

Distinguished Guests and Participants!

The importance of voter registration in an electoral process cannot be over emphasized. Putting the right legal framework and building the necessary

capacity to deliver an accurate voter register is always an asset to organizing peaceful elections. Over the years, in most African countries, one of the major challenges that keep recurring during elections has been imperfect nature voter registration processes and the ensuing unfair voter registers that in some cases tend to disenfranchise voters.

Therefore a good investment in voter registration such as this BRIDGE Training is always necessary. It is based on this assumption that the Africa Union Commission, through the Democracy and Electoral Assistance Unit is proud to organize this training in collaboration with the National Electoral Commission

In relation to voter registration system, it is the objective of the African Union

Commission to contribute to their design and implementation to ensure that their outcomes are devoid of controversies and have contributed contentious electoral outcomes in several Africa countries. It is our hope that this training will contribute the capacity of the National Electoral Commission to come out with a voter register that enhances voter participation and in effective on the Election Day come 2015.

Distinguished Guests and Participants!

To ensure that EMBs all over the continent have enhanced capacity to manage elections, the African Union Commission now lays a lot of emphasis on technical assistance. Therefore, for the year 2014, the Africa Union Commission has already provided BRIDGE Trainings for the EMBs of Burkina Faso and Madagascar. The United Republic of Tanzania is the third country this year to benefit from this form of technical assistance. Other countries expected to benefit from Africa Union assistance this year include Guinea, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Central Africa Republic, Comores, and Tunisia.

As I stated during the opening of the BRIDGE training on Gender and Elections in Zanzibar, this BRIDGE training on Voter Registration for the NEC marks the beginning of a series of engagements by the African Union Commission to support the ongoing electoral process in the United Republic of Tanzania in preparation for elections in 2015.

To be specific, the BRIDGE Trainings are expected to be followed by the introduction of a project on electoral risk management which is intended to assist the National Electoral Commissions and the Zanzibar Electoral Commission to promote peaceful election before, during and after. Discussions have already begun with the Zanzibar Electoral Commission and the National Electoral Commission on this project.

The next commitment of the Africa Union Commission to the electoral process in the United Republic of Tanzania will be the deployment of long term observers. We also have a Follow-up program through which we work with Elections Management Bodies (EMBs) to implement recommendations emanating from the work of Africa Union Election Observation Missions. The Follow-up program is to ensure that the work of Africa Union Commission in electoral processes in Member States does not end with elections observation but there is an effort to ensure that recommendations offered during elections observation are implemented to bring about improvements in subsequent elections.

Distinguished Guests and Participants!

The National BRIDGE Training, as it is known, forms part of the Technical assistance of the Africa Union Commission to Elections management bodies in Africa. Since its inception, over 20 Member States have benefitted from it. The objective of the national BRIDGE Training is to deliver on the mandate of the Africa Union to enhance the capacity of EMBs to organize credible elections. Building the capacity of EMBs either before or after an election is clear

demonstration of the commitment of the Africa Union Commission go beyond elections observation missions to ensure that Member States' Election Management Bodies retain the necessary capacity to organize credible elections and hence support democratic consolidation on the continent.

Let me also add that assistance provided by the Africa Union Commission on electoral process is not limited to only BRIDGE Trainings. The second aspect of technical assistance to EMBs includes the provision of experts to work with EMBs as part of preparation for elections. Under this programme an EMB can request the assistance from the Africa Union Commission for the services of a consultant to provide expertise for a critical aspect of the elections, for example in the area of Information Technology.

Distinguished Guests and Participants!

In the five days, I hope our team of facilitators will take us through all the essentials topics on Voter registration and I hope that they will meet your expectation. I want to encourage all participants to put in their best and share experiences to enrich the training since all of you bring on board years of experiences.

As I conclude my remarks, I would like to urge you to show great commitment and participate fully in this training. I look forward to a great and wonderful training these next five days. Let me end by saying that the Africa Union through DEAU will be ready to support you any time it becomes necessary and that this training is just the beginning of many such capacity trainings to come.

Ashanteni Sana!