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**Opening remarks by H.E. Aisha Abdullahi, Commissioner for Political Affairs  
2<sup>nd</sup> Steering Committee Meeting of the Association of Africa Electoral Authorities  
held in Inter-Continental Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
7 – 8 August 2014**

**Distinguished Chairpersons and Commissioners of the Steering Committee of the  
Association of Africa Electoral Authorities**

**Representatives of African Regional EMB Networks**

**Colleagues from the African Union Commission,**

**Good Morning**

It gives me great pleasure to open this 2<sup>nd</sup> Steering Committee meeting of the Association of African Electoral Authorities (AAEA). As you are aware, I have opened all the meetings of AAEA in person. This reflects the level of commitment of the African Union Commission and the Department of Political Affairs to its revival. So from the onset, I want to reiterate the point that the Department of Political Affairs will continue to support your work until the objectives of this Committee are fully attained.

**Distinguished chairpersons and commissioners**

Let me put this meeting in historical perspective. It should be recalled that the need to revive the AAEA emerged as a recommendation during the Continental EMB Forum in Lusaka in 2014. Following that, the Department of Political Affairs took up the challenge to implement the recommendation of the Continental EMB forum to revive the AAEA.

The first meeting was organised in May 2013 in Addis Ababa where an Interim Steering Committee was appointed comprised of Prof. ATTAHIRU JEGA of Nigeria, Dr. SAMUEL AZU'U FONKAM (Cameroon), Mr. AHMED HASSAN ISSAC (Kenya), ADV. PANSY TLAKULA (South Africa) Mrs. MAIDA SA-ADATU (Ghana) and Prof. MERGA BEKANA (Ethiopia).

The meeting also proposed that a study be carried out in order to understand what needs to be done to make the AAEA fully operational again. Consequently, the first Steering Committee met here in Addis Ababa from 7- 8 February this year to consider the Study submitted by the consultant and worked on a draft Charter. One of the suggestions of the Steering Committee was the need to expand the Steering Committee to bring on board EMBs from all regions of the continent. The objective was to ensure that there is a common understanding and agreement from the entire continent on the importance of reviving the AAEA. This explains why this meeting includes EMBs or EMB networks who are participating for the first time. I want to, therefore, take the opportunity to welcome you and to say that your participation is critical to the revival of the AAEA and that it is not late for you to make your contributions to that effect.

**Distinguished Chairpersons and Commissioners,**

You will all agree with me that since that first meeting in May 2013, a lot of progress has been made: a comprehensive study has been carried out that points to a new direction to be taken; and a draft Charter has also been developed. This progress, in my mind, means that we are closer to realizing our objective of reviving the AAEA. I therefore want to encourage you to use this meeting, which I understand is the last meeting of the Steering Committee, to conclude your work. I am happy to note that one of the items on your agenda today is preparation for a general assembly meeting during which the new AAEA is expected to be launched. I am personally looking forward to that meeting.

**Distinguished Chairpersons and Commissioners,**

As I have emphasized over and over again, the AAEA is very important institution for democratic consolidation and the management of credible elections in Africa. The role played by the AAEA in the past attests to this fact.

Again, there many of regional networks of EMBs currently playing leading roles in democratic elections on the continent. While the regional networks are very important, the AAEA can play an overarching role to further consolidate democratic elections. It is for this reason that we must do whatever we can to ensure that the AAEA is fully operational again.

**Distinguished Chairpersons and Commissioners,**

I have no doubt that a revitalized AAEA will be of immense benefit to both regional EMB networks and the continental and also to the AU Commission especially in the area of technical assistance. For instance, the AAEA and the African Union Commission could work hand-in-hand in the provision of technical assistance for its members. Also a united AAEA could play an important role in African Union Election Observation Missions. In the end, the whole African continent will reap the benefits of a revived AAEA.

**Distinguished Chairpersons and Commissioners,**

I want to conclude my brief remarks by thanking you once again for taking time off your busy schedules to be here today. I wish you successful deliberations and look forward to receiving the outcome of this meeting.

I now have the honour to declare this meeting open.

I thank you.