



LAUNCH OF THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COUNCIL OF THE AFRICAN UNION (ECOSOCC)

Africa's Civil Society will gather at the headquarters of the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from **27 to 30 March 2005 for the launching of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union (ECOSOCC)**. This historic occasion will mark the beginning of a new phase in the Union's activities. Participants will come together to determine the modalities for implementing the functions of ECOSOCC; begin establishing a consultation process for election of members to the ECOSOCC General Assembly; and elect a two-year interim Standing Committee. H.E. President Olusegun Obasanjo, the Chair of the African Union will attend the official opening session and the election of Officers of ECOSOCC on the morning of 29 March 2005.

ABOUT ECOSOCC

On the occasion of its inauguration in Maputo, Mozambique in July 2003, the African Union embarked on a course to transform and integrate the Continent. The aims and aspirations of the new Union were a response to the calls for democracy and development from Africa's vibrant civil society institutions. The Continent's leaders determined to build a Union that was *people-oriented*. Aware of the rich and diverse human and institutional resources at the grassroots level, the new Union, then, would be devoted to building strong partnerships between the governments and all segments of the society. The impulse is not for the African Union to organize civil society. Rather the organizing principle of the ECOSOCC of the African Union is one in which civil society would **organize themselves** to work with the Organization.

The distinctive character of the African Union's ECOSOCC is that it is an opportunity for African civil society to play an active role in charting the future of the Continent, organizing itself in partnership with African governments to contribute to the principles, policies and programmes of the Union.

Established under the provisions of Articles 5 and 22 of the African Union's Constitutive Act, ECOSOCC is the vehicle for building a strong partnership between governments and all segments of African civil society. The Statute of ECOSOCC, adopted by the Heads of State and Government at the Third Ordinary Session of the Assembly in July 2004 define it as an advisory organ of the African Union composed of different social and professional groups of the Member States of the African Union [Assembly/AU/Dec.42 (III)]. The composition of ECOSOCC shall include African social groups, professional groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and cultural organizations.

ECOSOCC IS MANDATED TO:

- Promote dialogue between all segments of African people on issues concerning the Continent and its future;
- Forge strong partnerships between governments and all segments of civil society, in particular, women, the youth, children the diaspora, organized labour, the private sector, and professional groups ;
- Promote the participation of African Civil Society in the implementation of the policies and programmes of the Union ;
- Support policies and programmes that promote peace, security and stability and foster Continental development and integration ;
- Promote and defend a culture of good governance, democratic principles and institutions, popular participation, human rights and social justice ;
- Promote, advocate and defend gender equality ;and
- Promote and strengthen the institutional, human and operational capacities of the African civil society.¹

One hundred and fifty (150) CSOs, representing national, regional, and Diaspora societies will be elected to ECOSOCC's highest decision and policy-making body - its General Assembly. Membership will reflect the core principles of gender parity and youth representation, and will be attained through a consultative process and elections.

The 10 Sectoral Cluster Committees of ECOSOCC

ESTABLISHED TO FORMULATE OPINIONS AND PROVIDE INPUTS INTO THE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS OF THE AFRICAN UNION:

Peace and Security

(conflict anticipation ; prevention; management and resolution ; post conflict reconstruction and peace building ; prevention and combating of terrorism ; use of child soldiers ; drug trafficking ; illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons and security reforms etc)

Political Affairs

(human rights ; rule of law ; democratic and constitutional rule ; good governance ; power sharing, electoral institutions ; humanitarian affairs and assistance etc)

Infrastructure and Energy

(energy ; transport ; communications ; infrastructure and tourism etc)

Social Affairs and Health

(health ; children ; drug control ; population ; migration ; labour and employment ; family ; aging ; the physically challenged ; sports ; culture ; youth and protection and social integration etc)

Human Resources, Science and Technology

(education ; illiteracy ; information technology ; communication ; human resources ; science and technology etc)

Trade and Industry

(trade ; industry ; handicrafts ; customs and immigration matters etc)

Rural Economy and Agriculture

(rural economy ; agriculture and food security ; livestock ; environment ; water and natural resources and desertification etc)

Economic Affairs

(economic integration ; monetary and financial affairs ; private sector development including the informal sector and resource mobilization etc)

Women and Gender

(women ; gender and development as a crosscutting issue etc)

Cross-Cutting Programmes

(all other cross-cutting issues that are not covered in above clusters including HIV/AIDS, international cooperation, coordination with institutions and organs of the Union).

LAUNCH OF ECOSOCC :

The **central objectives** of the March launch of ECOSOCC are :

¹ Statutes of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union, adopted by the Assembly of the African Union, 3rd Ordinary Session, 6 – 8 July 2004, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Assembly/AU/Dec.42(III).

- To determine the modalities for translating the objectives and functions of ECOSOCC into institutional processes ;
- To establish a consultation process for election of members to ECOSOCC; and
- To elect an interim Standing Committee and Officers for two years in order to implement the operationalization of ECOSOCC.

ECOSOCC's structure includes a **General Assembly**, a **Standing Committee**, **Sectoral Cluster Communities** and a **Credentials Committee**. In order to begin the groundwork for operationalizing ECOSOCC, the CSOs congregating in Addis Ababa in March 2005 shall establish consultation processes for elections of members at the national, regional, and Diaspora levels. Finally, they will elect interim Officers and Members who will serve for a period of two (2) years.

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