



**REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE PERMANENT GENERAL
ASSEMBLY OF THE ECONOMIC SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COUNCIL
OF THE AFRICAN UNION (ECOSOCC)**

JANUARY 2010

Council will recall, that at its 15th Ordinary session held in Sirte, Libya in July 2009, I noted that the Permanent General Assembly had embarked simultaneously on building its institutions as well as developing and implementing a programme of activities. This had to be done while consolidating its own structures and developing the appropriate inter-organ relationship with other units of the African Union. To ensure that the necessary traction is given to the overriding objective of ensuring the creation and the sustaining of a people oriented African Union, outfitted to deliver on its promises to its citizenry, a communication strategy based on sensitization activities, publications and the creation of an elaborate and interactive website have also been initiated.

The consolidation of its structures involved the completion of the election process in most members states and creating the critical mass necessary to make its operations relevant and effective. This also has required the intensification of interaction with the African Diaspora Community on the process for their representation within the ECOSOCC so as to chart the guidelines necessary for its implementation. The development of a programme of activities was intensified with the operationalisation of the Custer committees. This operationalisation involved the development of

activities as well as the completion of the constitution of membership of the different clusters. The reflection on an overall strategy for the development of inter-organ relationship has commenced in earnest and will be fine-tuned and executed in 2010. This process has been twinned with the involvement of the ECOSOCC in the process of restructuring the framework of AU-EU partnership.

Meetings of the ECOSOCC Standing Committee.

The Standing Committee, held two sessions in 2009. The first was held in Accra, Ghana from the 23-25 of July 2009 and the second in Kampala Uganda from the 19-21 December, 2009.

Accra Session:

This session underscored the need for ECOSOCC to continue in its efforts to mainstream civil society participation the processes of the African Union. The mapping process that had already commenced was seen as key to this process. When a register of Civil Society organisations will be operational at CIDO in conformity with the recommendations of the High Level Panel on the Audit of the African Union and adopted by the Executive Council, it will be an important accelerator in the process.

The progress of the AU-EU partnership was discussed and the Standing Committee noted that mutual respect, absence of patronization had emerged as the basis on which the process would continue. The association of non ECOSOCC members to the process permitted the engagement of the wider African Civil Society as to insure input from CSOs with pointed expertise. The partnership between AU and EU Civil Society had to proceed within the context of the wider partnership between the AU and the EU as envisaged by the Lisbon Declaration. It noteworthy to mention the fact that I was invited to the “European Development Days” organized by the European Union and Sweden in Stockholm between the October 22 and 24. I was called upon to address a session on “Citizens At the Heart of Africa-EU Partnership “. On the margins of this elaborate

conference, I was able to engage with the relative EU departments in charge of coordinating AU-EU CSO arrangements as well as with the leadership of European CSO umbrella organization.

ECOSOCC is aware of the need in this process, to bring on board other partnerships being built at the level of the Union itself was emphasized i.e. Afro-Latin America, Afro-Turkey, Afro-Arab, Afro-China etc.

The Accra meeting discussed at great length the operationalisation of the Clusters, which necessitated detailed discussions on the composition of the cluster committees, their powers and inter alia their functions. Rules that will govern their operations as well as the interaction with other organs and units of the African Union were also discussed. In 2010 it is the intention of ECOSOCC to concert with other organs and units of the African Union to elaborate clear rules of engagement that will permit each organ or unit to fully discharge its obligations vis a vis each other as stated in the Constitutive Act of the Union.

The ECOSOCC budget was also discussed during the Accra Session which mandated the Secretariat to complete and finalize the budget before presentation to the competent instances of the Union.

Kampala Session:

The Kampala session in the main was devoted to the reviewing of the activities of 2009, the framework for the operationalisation of the Cluster Committees, the budget, and the completion of the ECOSOCC electoral process by including the remaining countries as well as the Diaspora.

The Livingston Formula on the Mechanism for interaction between the PSC and African Civil Society was a benchmark in the process of putting in place clear of engagement between the other organs and units of the ECOSOCC.

Outside of the general framework of the operationalisation of the Cluster Committees it is noteworthy that the Peace and Security Cluster, the Political Affairs Cluster, Cross Cutting Cluster and the Youth Affairs Cluster, have jump-started the process of Cluster operationalisation. The year 2010

being the “Year of Peace and Security” the take-off the relevant ECOSOCC Cluster is essential to anchoring the activities of our organ within the context of the African Union.

The Political Affairs Cluster collaborated with the Commission to organize an AU-CSO Pre-Summit meeting in Kampala, Uganda, from 19-21 December 2009. The Peace and Security Cluster organized a meeting with African CSOs on the operationalization of the Livingstone formula and the 1st PSC-ECOSOCC annual meeting in 2010. The outcome has been presented to the Commission and the Chairperson has endorsed the inclusion of the annual PSC-ECOSOCC meeting as one of the main features of the AU Year of Peace and Security in 2010. The Cross-Cutting and Youth Clusters have also collaborated working with the Commission and the World Bank on preparations for the launching of the Development Marketplace for the African Diaspora Action (DMADA) project.

The continued and effective operation of the clusters will be a key priority of ECOSOCC for 2010, while it is a given that all clusters will not be able to proceed with the same momentum, the elaboration of the different frameworks should not get stalled. The budgetary constraints of last year did also have their effect on the operationalisation process. This year’s budget still carries that defect for the simple reason that without an operationalisation plan that permits ECOSOCC to move into programme and activity mode, it is difficult to come up with a budget. This will be hopefully cured in 2011, as all the clusters will have their guidelines and will be poised to start the programmes and activity phase.

CIDO is helping with the consideration of the rather complex issue of organizing the participation of the Diaspora in the ECOSOCC processes. While the statutes of ECOSOCC allocate 20 seats to the Diaspora, the practical organization of proper elections that will permit their membership into ECOSOCC remains a challenge. The increase in interest and the mobilization of the Diaspora as regards ECOSOCC, while constituting a

cause for excitement, might well make ECOSOCC a victim of its own success, if not harnessed in rational manner. It is hoped that 2010 will see at the very least the adoption of an adequate formula for Diaspora participation on an elected basis. One must hasten to add that as it stands, ECOSOCC is not deprived of input from Diaspora. Its participation in the ECOSOCC processes is assured by the cooptation of the Diaspora into the different structures as envisaged by the Statutes of ECOSOCC.

CONCLUSION

From the forgoing it can be said that the Permanent General Assembly of the ECOSOCC, is now poised to fully assume its role as prescribed by the Constitutive Act. The Cluster Committees are in place the full constitution of their membership is in the process of completion. The first order of priority of 2010, will be the elaboration detailed guidelines duly negotiated with other units of the Union. These will be submitted to Council for ratification in July 2010 as required by Council Decision EX.CL/Dec.508(XV) of July 2009.

The ECOSOCC process has redoubled the interest of Civil Society Organizations in the African Union. It has made them to positively seek ways of engaging with the Union, which in some case have been very creative. The creation of a website and the publication of a journal will soon be supplemented with other publications on the workings of the ECOSOCC. When the budget for the next year will be elaborated to include programme and activity support, ECOSOCC would have reached its cruising altitude. It is hoped that this new found momentum will contribute to ensuring and nurturing one of the main aspirations of the African Union, that is to be people-driven.