

## **ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COUNCIL (ECOSOCC)**

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**Venue:** Nairobi, Kenya

### **ECOSOCC's Peace and Security cluster holds interface meeting with AUC and RECS/RMs**

The African Union Economic, Social, and Cultural Council (AU-ECOSOCC) held an interface meeting on 20th April 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya to provide a forum for dialogue and increased collaboration between the ECOSOCC Peace and Security Cluster, the African Union Commission (AUC), RECs/RMs, and select Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on African peace and security issues. The dialogue was specifically, within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) framework which offers a unique opportunity to spur active civil society participation in African Union (AU) peace and security programs.

More specifically, the fourth European Union Support Programme to the African Peace and Security Architecture (EU APSA IV), which includes civil society engagement as one of the key objectives, has set the stage for reinforcing CSO capacity and participation in peace and security.

Opening the meeting, H.E George Kwanya, Deputy Ambassador of the Republic of Kenya to Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the African Union, expressed his desire for concrete conclusions to move the conversation beyond the meeting to practical actions. He reiterated Kenya's commitment to hosting AU engagements and said the country would continue rendering its support to ECOSOCC initiatives.

The Ambassador further noted that the meeting was important because CSOs have an important role to play in improving the peace and security situation in the continent, thus the planned discussions would be key in informing how RECs and AU bodies support CSOs to meaningfully contribute to the APSA.

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Ambassador Kwanya concluded by urging participants to ensure that the conclusions of the deliberations would be used to enhance the capacity of CSOs in implementing the Livingstone Formula and Maseru Conclusions.

Mr. Khalid Boudali, Presiding Officer of ECOSOCC stressed that ECOSOCC was willing to partner with different stakeholders to enhance peace and security efforts of non-state actors. He noted that non-state actors contribute to bringing the voices of victims of conflict to decision makers.

“In view of this, there is room for them to contribute to the AU’s efforts on peace and security. CSO involvement in PSC programs and processes increases their capacity to meaningfully contribute to those efforts,” he said.

Mr. William Carew, Head of the AU-ECOSOCC Secretariat also explained that, “ECOSOCC is championing a project titled ‘Enhancing African Civil Society Participation in the African Peace and Security Architecture’, with the goal of ensuring the implementation of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) Protocol, the Livingstone Formula, and the Maseru Conclusions, as well as increasing CSO involvement and participation in implementation of the APSA.”

Ms. Elizabeth Mutunga, Head of Governance, Peace and Security at the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) acknowledged that, “since CSOs are not tied to bureaucracies that hold the rest of us back,” they play a vital role in advocating the rights of communities affected by conflicts; holding governments and other stakeholders accountable in matters of peace and security.”

She added that the presence of the ECOSOCC Peace and Security Cluster was testament to the need for more opportunities for CSOs to penetrate spaces that empower their capacities to engage in the AU’s efforts to ‘Silence the Guns’ and bring about sustainable peace in Africa.

Mr. Jonathan Sandy, Head of the ECOSOCC Peace and Security Cluster, gave a presentation on the goals and mission of the Peace and Security Cluster since its operationalization as well as prior successes of the Cluster. He spoke about areas for synergy between the Peace and Security Cluster, the AU, the PSC, the RECs/RMs, and the potential for support.

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Given the nature of African peace and security, the ECOSOCC Peace and Security Cluster addresses, but is not limited to a number of key issues that are prevalent in the thematic area. These critical areas include conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacebuilding, terrorism prevention and combat, drug and arms trafficking, and security reforms. Through these mechanisms as well as following the kick-off of the EU-APSA IV project, AU-ECOSOCC has helped to highlight the critical need for African CSOs to be more involved in the peace and security initiatives of the Union.

This meeting afforded participants the opportunity to begin developing a preliminary roadmap/strategy for enhancing cooperation between the ECOSOCC PSC, the AUC, and RECs/RMs based on the existing frameworks. The participants drafted a joint work plan for actions/activities between all parties present.

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### **About ECOSOCC**

The Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) was established in July 2004 as an Advisory Organ composed of different social and professional groups of AU Member States. The mandate of ECOSOCC is to contribute, through advice, to the effective translation of the objectives, principles and policies of the African Union into concrete programmes, as well as the evaluation of these programmes.

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