



**ECOSOCC**  
Economic Social & Cultural Council

**The Voice of the  
African Citizenry**

# REPOSITIONING ECOSOCC IN AGENDA 2063 IMPLEMENTATION

Advisory Note  
October 2023

An Organ of the  
**African  
Union**



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## 1. PREAMBLE

This Advisory Note intends to appraise Member States on ECOSOCC's renewed value-proposition in support of AU-citizen interface in the implementation of Agenda 2063. The note outlines selected strategic areas of citizen participation and citizen engagement on the continent that require a strong AU-citizen interface in implementation of Agenda 2063. The note seeks Member State support to reposition ECOSOCC as a means of deepening its impact and role within the AU ecosystem and across the African continent.

## 2. BACKGROUND

AU's Agenda 2063 Aspiration 6 places a premium on having 'an Africa whose development is people driven, and relying on the potential offered by African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children.' Achieving this aspiration, requires close collaboration, cooperation and partnership between the African Union (AU), Member States, Regional Economic Communities, and African citizens and their organizations and formations. The transformation of the OAU to the AU ignited robust engagement with non-state actors in the initiatives and processes of the AU<sup>1</sup>. In addition, the shifts in focus from political liberation and emancipation to broader socio-economic and cultural matters offer increased opportunities for engagement with African civil society<sup>2</sup>.

The Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) was established as a platform to build partnerships with African civil society organisations and to harness the rich and diverse human and institutional resources that they offer at the grassroots level. The unique character of ECOSOCC is that it provides an opportunity for African civil society organisations in their diversity to play an active part in shaping the future of Africa, organising themselves in partnership with Member States to contribute to the principles, policies, and programmes of the AU<sup>3</sup>

## 3. LEGAL, POLICY & INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The foundational legal basis for ECOSOCC is the AU Constitutive Act Articles 5 and 22. Article 5 establishes ECOSOCC as one of the organs of the AU. Article 22 provides that ECOSOCC shall be 'an advisory organ composed of different social and professional groups of the Member States of the Union.'

The AU Heads of State and Government adopted the Statutes of ECOSOCC at the Third Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly in July 2004<sup>4</sup>. The Statutes of the ECOSOCC elaborate its functions, powers, composition, and organisation in line with Article 22(2) of the AU Constitutive Act. As provided under Article 2 of the Statutes of the ECOSOCC, the objectives of the ECOSOCC include among others: forging strong partnerships between governments and all segments of the civil society, in particular women, the youth, children, the Diaspora, organized labour, the private sector and professional groups; promoting continuous dialogue between all segments of the African people on issues concerning Africa and its future; and promoting the participation of African civil society in the implementation of the policies and programmes of the Union. ECOSOCC provides a unique opportunity for citizen voices to influence the AU agenda and for AU to use it as a special-purpose vehicle for reaching African citizens.

Initially, ECOSOCC's Secretariat was housed at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In 2018, the Government of Zambia and the AU signed an Agreement for Zambia to host the Secretariat of ECOSOCC in Lusaka, Zambia. In December 2019, the ECOSOCC Secretariat was relocated to Lusaka.


1 See Francis N. Ikome, The challenges of Diaspora representation in the African Union's ECOSOCC Assembly (2009) Centre for Policy Studies Policy Brief 55.

2 As above.

3 ECOSOCC, The Genesis of ECOSOCC <https://ecosocc.au.int/en/about/overview> accessed 30 November 2022

4 Assembly/AU/Dec.42 (III).





The Secretariat facilitates ECOSOCC linkages across the various AU organs, institutions and specialised agencies, and provides secretarial and policy support for its initiatives<sup>5</sup>. It also offers support to the ECOSOCC Assembly, the various Committees, and also facilitates its internal elections.

## 4. OBJECTIVES OF ADVISORY

The objectives of this Advisory Note are to:

- a. Appraise Member States on ECOSOCC's renewed value-proposition in support of AU-citizen interface in implementation of Agenda 2063 – including implementation of the AU norms and tracking progress of implementation at Member States levels;
- b. Outline strategic areas of citizen participation and citizen engagement on the continent that require a strong AU-citizen interface in implementation of Agenda 2063; and
- c. Seek Member States support to deepen ECOSOCC's impact and role.

## 5. VALUE PROPOSITION

ECOSOCC's Value Proposition Includes:

- a. ***AU's principal organ for citizens' engagement that ensures voices and views of citizens are included and they participate effectively in continental affairs***

The AU Constitutive Act, outlines the vision of the AU to build 'an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven and managed by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena.' In addition, Agenda 2063 Aspiration 6 underscores the desire for 'an Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential offered by African People, especially its Women and Youth, and caring for Children.' As noted in the Second Continental Progress Report on the Implementation of Agenda 2063, this demonstrates the premium placed by the Union on - inclusive and active participation of all its citizens in affairs of the continent - for sustained growth, stability, and socio-economic development.<sup>6</sup>

Alongside the Pan African Parliament (PAP), the ECOSOCC is the AU's principal organ to ensure the participation and inclusion of African citizens' voices and views in the continental affairs. Through ECOSOCC, African citizens engage with the AU and Member States in political, social, and economic issues that affect them.

- b. ***Platform for diverse and multi-stakeholder actors***

As envisioned in Article 22 of the AU's Constitutive Act and Article 3 of the ECOSOCC Statutes, ECOSOCC constitutes different social and professional groups of AU Member States. These include: social groups such as those representing women, children, the youth, the elderly and people with disability and special needs; professional groups such as engineers, health practitioners, social workers, legal professionals, social scientists, academia, business organizations, national chambers of commerce, workers, employers, industry and agriculture as well as other private sector interest groups; non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and voluntary organizations; and cultural organizations.

This makes ECOSOCC a unique organ that can convene diverse and multi-stakeholder dialogues and other engagements, to harness their comparative advantages to support AU Member States to implement their commitments to the African people.

<sup>5</sup> ECOSOCC, Secretariat <https://ecosocc.au.int/en/structure/secretariat> accessed 02 December 2022.

<sup>6</sup> See AU, African Union Commission and African Union Development Agency - NEPAD. 2022. AUC & AUDA-NEPAD Second Continental Report on the Implementation of Agenda 2063. AUC & AUDA-NEPAD, Midrand, South Africa. p43.

c. ***Represented and active at Member States level through country chapters***

The ECOSOCC is represented and active at Member States level through national chapters. The national chapters are critical since they entrench the role of civil society organisations in continental affairs. ECOSOCC national chapters are aimed at ensuring that the objectives of ECOSOCC are achieved in AU Member States and that civil society organisations take part in the processes and activities of the AU at Member States level.

With the establishment of national chapters in all AU Member States, ECOSOCC would become a 'one-stop-shop' for ensuring citizen participation in all affairs of the AU and African governments. The growth and development of national chapters is therefore instrumental in extending the AU footprint across the African continent through self-organized platforms that bring together a diversity of actors at country level. To support the development of strong country chapters will therefore go a long way in enhancing the engagement and participation of citizens in building the Africa we want.

d. ***Repository of knowledge to support the popularization, ratification, domestication, implementation, and reporting of Member States Commitments***

The AU has developed a robust set of norms to enhance good governance, peace and security and socio-economic development across the Continent. However, the main challenge has been the ratification, domestication, implementation, and reporting by AU Member States. The internalisation and implementation of these norms calls for strong systems and institutions which can popularize them and offer oversight at the same time.

Civil society organisations who associate with ECOSOCC as members and as a broad constituency represent a diverse range of technical experts in several thematic areas that intersect with AU norms. Their expertise, competence, and knowledge should be leveraged to support popularization, ratification, domestication, implementation, and reporting of Member States commitments. In addition, through national chapters, ECOSOCC offers a platform for CSOs to advocate for the translation of AU norms into national visions, policies, and plans for both medium-term and long-term socio-economic and political development and transformation. National chapters provide a platform for awareness and engagement in development activities founded on the domestication and implementation of AU norms. Thus, ECOSOCC in line with its mandate and as a member of African Governance Architecture (AGA) Platform, is uniquely placed to support AU's efforts to ensure the dissemination and implementation of commitments by AU Member States.

e. ***Early warning and early response mechanism***

Considering its proximity with African citizens, ECOSOCC serves as an early warning and early response mechanism for challenges faced by citizens and supports the AU to reflect citizens' views, aspirations and demands. As a platform that brings together civil society organisations across the Continent, ECOSOCC is uniquely placed to identify and serve as an early response mechanism for challenges, concerns, agitation, and frustrations faced by African citizens and in turn share these with Member States and the AU for early action. ECOSOCC leverages on its constituent civil society organisations to support the AU to reflect citizens' views, aspirations and demands in its policies and processes. In this way ECOSOCC has the potential to play a 'first responder' role by ensuring the critical concerns of citizens are collated and shared with relevant organs and institutions of the AU.

## 6. ECOSOCC STRATEGIC AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT

Africa still faces significant challenges to achieve its sustainable development agenda which include peace, security threats, democracy and governance deficits, poverty, migration, climate change, and slow integration. Central to the AU Shared Values is the vision of an integrated Continent that addresses these challenges and fosters good governance, peace and security, and socio-economic growth and development.

In line with its mandate, ECOSOCC contributes to the realization of this vision. Considering the diversity and multi-stakeholder composition of ECOSOCC, it leverages on the comparative advantage and expertise these organisations offer to support AU's efforts in the following areas: Agenda 2063 – Second Ten Year Implementation Plan; Post Covid Recovery Efforts and Citizen Participation; Migration; Peace and Security; Climate change and security; and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).



### a. *Agenda 2063 – Second ten-year implementation plan*

The AU Agenda 2063 seeks to deliver inclusive and sustainable development. The Agenda underscores the need for the Continent's development to be driven by its people. As mentioned under Aspiration 6, paragraph 47 of Agenda 2063 underscores the need for Africa's development to be driven by its people in all their diversity.

The First Ten Year Implementation Plan (FTYIP) of Agenda 2063 (2013 – 2023), which is the first in a series of five ten-year plans over the fifty-year horizon of Agenda 2063's 50-year time frame, comes to an end in 2023. As stated in the Second Continental Progress Report on Agenda 2063, 'Agenda 2063 initiatives have gained substantial momentum and underscores Africa's determination to realise its 50-year development plan.'<sup>7</sup>

Building on the achievements under the First Ten Year Implementation Plan (FTYIP), ECOSOCC is positioned to support the AU and Member State efforts to identify priority areas, outline targets, and policy measures required to implement the Second Ten Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063. In addition, ECOSOCC will raise awareness, popularise, and give visibility to the main development initiatives outlined under the Second Ten Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063. In this regard ECOSOCC has developed a CSO Training Toolkit on Monitoring Agenda 2063 to support CSOs in the monitoring of Agenda 2063 projects.

The toolkit will improve CSO understanding of Agenda 2063 and CSOs' role in its implementation and build the ability of CSOs to develop quantitative and qualitative indicator-based approaches to monitoring the implementation of Agenda 2063's Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan (STYIP). The toolkit builds on ongoing approaches to citizen participation in the AU organs and guides users through practical steps to improve citizen participation in AU processes, in this case the Agenda 2063. Deepening the implementation of the Agenda 2063 projects as encapsulated in the STYIP will be greatly aided by the CSO Toolkit.

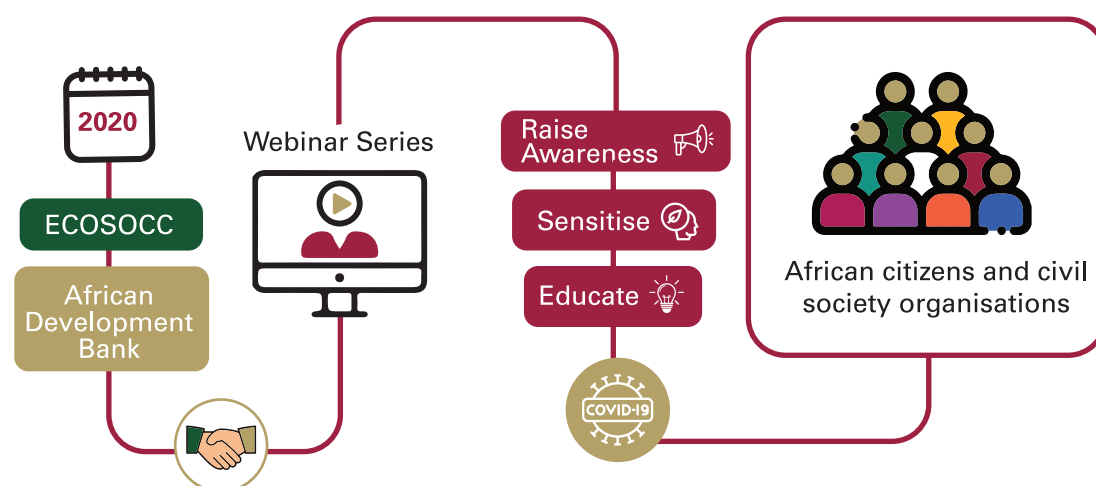
## b. *Post Covid 19 recovery*

Due to Covid-19, the African Continent has suffered serious political, social, and economic shocks which threatened to erode gains made under Agenda 2063 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since the advent of the pandemic, AU Member States have taken different measures to control the spread and impact of the pandemic. The measures included lockdowns, travel restrictions, ambitious public health interventions, broadened social safety nets, and monetary as well as fiscal interventions.

While many AU Member States have succeeded in controlling the spread of the virus, the political, social and economic impacts are unprecedented. To address this challenge, AU and its Member States are engaging in post-covid recovery efforts. In line with its mandate and building on comparative advantages of its constituency of diverse and robust civil society organisations, ECOSOCC has supported AU's and Member States post-Covid recovery efforts while ensuring active citizen participation.

This support has entailed issues such as: affordable access to medical supplies; protecting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs); implementation of the AfCFTA to fast-track the Continent's industrialisation and position its economy to better withstand future global shocks; and clean and sustainable consumption and production.

In 2020, during the pandemic lockdown period, ECOSOCC and the African Development Bank innovated a webinar series to raise awareness, sensitise and educate African citizens and civil society organisations about Covid-19 and associated public health guidance from the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) and World Health Organisation (WHO).



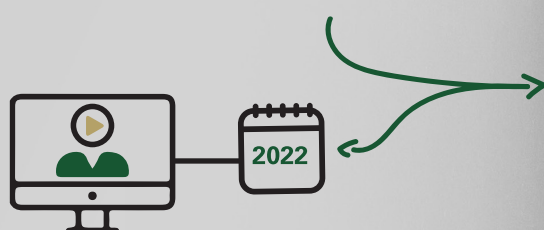
This was an important intervention especially as Africa moved away from the emergency response stage of the pandemic to long-term reconstruction. The outcome of this process is a Covid Advisory Report that consolidated key policy proposals from the webinar series. The themes focused on the elaboration of new frameworks that will be required to facilitate recovery, build resilience and adapt institutions and systems to the realities of post-Covid-19 socio-economics in Africa. The Advisory Report also identified the most effective means to deploy its recommended policies, as advocacy tools by civil society practitioners.

### c. *Migration*

At the heart of Africa's integration agenda is free movement of persons in the Continent. Considering the importance of free movement of persons to the Continent's integration agenda, migration has become one of the top priorities of the AU and its Member States. Migration within and from the Continent is likely to increase in the near future because of various demographic, economic, and political factors<sup>8</sup>. With a population of over 1.2 billion people and projected to increase<sup>9</sup>, there is need to manage migration in a way that promotes political and socio-economic prosperity of the Continent.

***ECOSOCC has been supporting AU's migration agenda. For instance, in June 2022, ECOSOCC published a Policy Booklet on Migration, Mobility and Displacement (2022).***

This was preceded by a Webinar Series on Migration, Mobility and Displacement in Africa.



These efforts sought to 'help achieve an enhanced and coordinated implementation of the revised Migration Policy Framework for Africa across AU member states, regional economic communities and the African Union.'<sup>10</sup> The foregoing efforts demonstrate ECOSOCC's capacity to support AU's migration agenda.



### d. *Democratic governance, peace and security*

Achievement of democratic governance, peace and security is critical to realisation of sustained growth and development in Africa. Agenda 2063, under Aspirations 3 and 4, outlined African peoples' desire for 'An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law' and 'a peaceful and secure Africa.' While Member States bear the primary responsibility to ensure peace and security within their borders, civil society organisations, have an important role to play. Their efforts complement states' efforts.

In recognition of the important role that civil society organisations play in supporting democratic governance, peace and security interventions across the Continent, ECOSOCC has been carrying out initiatives to build their capacity in this thematic area<sup>11</sup>. In line with the Peace and Security Council (PSC) Protocol, the Livingstone Formula and the Maseru Conclusions, ECOSOCC seeks to strengthen the capacity and participation of civil society organisations in the area of democratic governance, peace and security. Efforts in this regard have included convening a Citizens' Forum on Democracy and Unconstitutional Changes of Government (UCG) in Africa in July 2022 in Lusaka, Zambia.

<sup>8</sup> Urso G & Hakami A, Regional Migration Governance in Africa: AU and RECs, EUR 29325 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2018, ISBN 978-92-79-92884-0, doi:10.2760/338319, JRC112055 p4.

<sup>9</sup> As above

<sup>10</sup> See ECOSOCC & GIZ, Policy Booklet on Migration, Mobility and Displacement (2022)

<sup>11</sup> See AU, ECOSOCC convenes CSO dialogue on cross-cutting issues on women, youth, peace and security, and child protection in conflict situations November 03, 2022 <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20221103/ecosocc-convenes-cso-dialogue-cross-cutting-issues-women-youth-peace-and> accessed 29 November 2022. See also AU, The Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) convenes annual Civil Society Organizations (CSO) meeting on the state of peace and security in Africa: Sharing experiences and lessons learned, Africa Press Release 25 November 2022.



#### e. *Climate change and security*

The AU in the Common Africa Position (CAP) on the Post 2015 Development Agenda recognised climate change as ‘one of the greatest challenges of our times’ and stressed a ‘deep concern with the vulnerability of developing countries, in particular in Africa, to the adverse impacts of climate change<sup>12</sup>’. In addition, in 2019, the World Bank while emphasizing the need to build resilience and adapting to climate change in the Continent, noted that ‘climate change threatens to push millions of Africans into poverty by 2030 and unravel hard-won development gains.<sup>13</sup>’ Thus, it is evident that the achievement of the aspirations under Agenda 2063 and the goals under Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development is largely tied to Africa’s response to climate change and security.

Considering its composition of civil society organisations with a range of diverse experts in areas including climate change and security, ECOSOCC serves as a platform to catalyse initiatives that address climate change and security in Africa in line with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and outcomes of the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) which has recently been concluded in Egypt. At the side-lines of the AU 2022 Mid-Year Summit ECOSOCC worked with various partners to find viable solutions for African citizens to continue building strategies that take into consideration the fact that climate change affects all areas of Africans’ lives adversely. For instance, increased climate variability is making agriculture more unpredictable and continuing desertification in some regions exacerbates the domestic fuel crisis. In urban areas, poor women and men are likely to bear the brunt of health problems caused by ‘urban heat island’ effects, increases in vector-borne diseases like malaria, etc. Further, it is appreciated that the effects of climate change on women and men will alter gender relations in ways that are not fully predictable at the present time. ECOSOCC will therefore continue to work closely with partners to raise awareness, build mitigation and adaptation measures including advocacy towards building a Fund for Loss and Damage that should support the most vulnerable communities in Africa.

#### f. *African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)*

The main aim of the AfCFTA is to establish a single market for goods and services to facilitate the free movement of persons and investments and to create the foundation for a Continental Customs Union. The World Bank estimates that the implementation of AfCFTA has the potential to lift 30 million people in the Continent out of extreme poverty, in addition to lifting 68 million others from moderate poverty<sup>14</sup>. While AfCFTA is promising, it is well appreciated that its implementation is both technical and political<sup>15</sup>. There are many challenges and trade-offs to be taken into account and addressed during the implementation of AfCFTA<sup>16</sup>. The challenges relate to trade policy, trade facilitation, procedure capacity, trade related infrastructure, trade finance, trade information and factor market integration.



<sup>12</sup> AU, Common Africa Position (CAP) on the Post 2015 Development Agenda para 58.


<sup>13</sup> The World Bank, This Is What It's All About: Building Resilience and Adapting to Climate Change in Africa 07 March 2019 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2019/03/07/this-is-what-its-all-about-building-resilience-and-adapting-to-climate-change-in-africa> accessed 02 December 2022.

<sup>14</sup> World Bank Group, 'The African Continental Free Trade Area: Economic and Distributional Effects.' 2020 International Bank for Reconstruction and Development P7.

<sup>15</sup> See African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), Conditions for Success in the Implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (2020) p4

<sup>16</sup> As above





In line with its mandate and building on comparative advantages of its constituency of diverse and robust civil society organisations, ECOSOCC supports addressing the mentioned challenges and the implementation of AfCFTA. The AfCFTA envisages the mobilization of stakeholders to participate in the fast tracking and implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement. ECOSOCC envisages that a mapping of strategic civil society partners across the entire continent will be an important step in identifying the critical resources available in each of the six regions and 55 African countries. This will allow ECOSOCC to ensure that it builds a strong network of partners across the continent that will participate in selected strategic activities for the implementation of AfCFTA.

## 7. STRENGTHENING ECOSOCC'S ROLE AND MANDATE

To strengthen ECOSOCC capacity to support the AU and Member States achieve Agenda 2063, we seek support in three critical areas:

a. ***Policy elaboration and clarity vide adoption of an Assembly Decision mandating ECOSOCC to develop an Annual AU Citizens Report.***

A Decision of the AU Assembly elaborating and clarifying ECOSOCC's lead role in coordinating citizens' engagement and participation at the AU and in developing an Annual AU Citizens Report is important to realization of ECOSOCC's mandate. The Report seeks to provide citizens an opportunity to engage and communicate with AU policymakers on the status, progress, challenges, and opportunities for implementation of AU Agenda 2063. Such a Report will equally buttress ECOSOCC's role in coordination of citizen engagement and participation with the AU and Member States.

b. ***Provide adequate financial, human, and technical resources of the Secretariat***

ECOSOCC's transformative capacity is tied to the building and strengthening of its structures and systems. Provision of adequate human, technical and financial resources at its Secretariat is necessary, as is detailed in the requested budget allocation and estimates. ECOSOCC structure is one that can leverage resources from the diversity of sources across the continent and among the 'friends of the AU'. At country level, ECOSOCC country chapters can be supported through innovative financing facilities that bring together resources from civil society, the private sector, philanthropy as well as Member State governments. This same model can be replicated in part at the continental level. Supporting ECOSOCC to build innovative financing mechanisms that leverage a diversity of human, technical and financial resources will go a long way in ensuring the effective engagement of African citizens across the continent.

c. ***Expedite the recruitment and finalization of the ECOSOCC Secretariat staffing structure***

An effective Secretariat is instrumental to the attainment of ECOSOCC's mandate. We call on Member States through an Assembly Decision to reiterate the need to expedite the recruitment and finalization of the ECOSOCC Secretariat staffing structure. ECOSOCC's work is currently undertaken through ten thematic clusters that include experts and Member Organizations of the General Assembly. At country level, each country defines its work program consistent with the strategic plan of ECOSOCC. At the continental level, ECOSOCC needs an adequate staff structure that would bring together all the work streams of ECOSOCC at various levels into one coherent whole. This requires the development of a strong support infrastructure at the Secretariat to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in program delivery.



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