



منظمة الموفقين والوسطاء والرقابيين الأفارقة  
African Ombudsman and Mediators Association  
Association des Ombudsman et Mediateurs Africains  
Associação dos Ombudsman e Mediadores Africanos



مركز بحوث الرقابيين الأفارقة  
African Ombudsman Research Centre  
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## 4<sup>th</sup> AOMA General Assembly: “AOMA 2014: Successes, challenges and prospects”

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 6 November 2014**

The first week of November 2014 passed successfully after proceedings with a three-day-long meeting of the 4<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (GA) of African Ombudsman and Mediators Association (AOMA). The meeting was held at the Headquarters of African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in the presence of higher state officials, key representatives from the AU, heads of the 39 member ombudsman institutions of AOMA, delegates from international organizations and media professionals. The agreement and decision that Ethiopia would host the Assembly was passed by members of the AOMA’s Executive Committee on a meeting held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in 2013.



Dr. Mulatu Teshome, President of the FDRE in the middle, Dr. Tjipilica, ex-president of AOMA & Ombudsman of Angola (left), Mrs. Fozia, currently elected president of AOMA & Ombudsman of Ethiopia (right)

The first couple of days were just occupied with AOMA - AU first bilateral conference. The conference specifically dealt with the means the two organizations work in collaboration so as to bring Africa a step ahead to a level of a peaceful, politically stabilized and socio-economically developed continent. The last day was left for the G.A. to discuss on different internal and external matters. In this day, the G.A. proposed different agreements, declarations and the amendment of AOMA’s Constitution for an official approval. Finally, the G.A. voted on the next Executive Committee and elected new President along with the vice presidents, the General Secretary and the treasurer.



During the bilateral conference, the centre of the discussion focused on the joint activities of the Association and the Commission aiming to deliberate at reaching to some possible point the role of ombudsman institutions are able to play towards the betterment of African peoples in all aspects.

Obviously, the objective behind establishing ombudsman institutions is to play the role of promoting, strengthening and upholding good governance and respecting of human rights through the realization of administrative justice so as to ensure peace, political stability and socio-economic development worldwide. The establishment of Ombudsman Institutions in Africa is therefore one of the major steps towards intending to take continental solution to the people, in this regards. The establishment of AOMA is also incomparably significant advancement in forming the integral part of member institutions towards a common goal. For the successfulness of which, the joint activity with the AU becomes significant in effect. It was this important factor that necessitated the conference.

The key message, of course, of the Association amidst their discussions lies on the part of the AUC to hold interest in 'raising governments' awareness about the value that the work of Ombudsman Institutions can add to their administrations". All African state governments are required to render active support to the noble work the Association undertakes in advocating for good governance, rule of law, transparency and accountability. They also need to recognize the Institution of the Ombudsman in their constitutional structures in order to enable their smooth work towards influencing countries' development. The Association underlines that Ombudsman Institutions could be "instrumental in dealing with conflicts through mediation, observation of elections and other interest that concerns the rights, freedoms and guarantees of citizens".

Hence, the AUC seems to have strong faith on the capacity of Ombudsman Institutions with regards to ensuring good governance and the protection of human rights without which it becomes impossible to think of continental stability. In order to use such "untapped potential" the Institutions have in the good governance endeavours, the Commission expresses its readiness to work to its capacity with the Association towards achieving the AU aim of silencing guns in the continent by 2020.

The last session was duly busy with the internal matters and the ratification of different agreements and declarations. These include the formalization of the adoption of "a Joint Operational Implementation Framework of the AOMA-AU Bilateral Agreement", the "OR Tambo Declaration on the Minimum Standards for an Effective Ombudsman Institution and Cooperation with the African Union on Strengthening Good

Governance”, and the “Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between African Ombudsman and Mediators Association (AOMA) and the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI), and the approval of “amendments to the AOMA Constitution”.

In order to capacitate their integration, the AOMA and the AU officially approved the already signed Joint Framework. They signed the bilateral cooperation agreement in October 2011 aimed at establishing cooperation in promoting the strategic priorities of AUC in the realm of democracy, good governance, the promotion and protection of human rights, transparency and administrative justice, including observations of elections in Africa. This agreement, in fact, moves their mutual interest-continental interest-to a more meaningful and result oriented progress. It is, of course, an encouraged step too towards accepting good governance endeavours as primary tool for Africa’s security. AOMA also has a permanent observer status within the AU. This seems to witness the incessantly permissible joint activity of the organizations.



Their collateral activity also strengthens ombudsman institutions in all member states of the AU and creates a combined effort between AOMA and other African Institutions to struggle jointly and multilaterally in the endeavour to bring about peace and stability across the continent.

The OR Tambo Declaration for Minimum Standards for Ombudsman Institutions which is a ground-breaking governance instrument was declared in February 2014 at a conference held in Kempton Park, the Republic of South Africa. The declaration aims at providing minimum standards of mainly guaranteeing autonomous power to Ombudsman Institutions. As mentioned in the strategic plan, the Association was established with a mission to “support and protect the independence and development of African Ombudsman Institutions by promoting information exchanges and best practices for the advancement of good governance and human rights in the continent”. Article 15(2) of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance also provides the independence and autonomy of the Institutions must be guaranteed by the Constitution. According to the expressions in the declaration, the independence extends to the extent that the Institution should not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority in the discharge of its duties. The discharge of the Ombudsman’s function is rather “subject to nothing but the law and commands of his and her conscience”. With this, it is believed that the Association succeeds in its objectives of:

- Encouraging the establishment, development and promotion of African Ombudsman Institutions;

- Fostering mutual support, cooperation and joint activity through information sharing, training and development of Ombudsman and staff;
- promoting good governance including the observance of human rights, transparency and administrative justice;
- supporting and promoting the autonomy and independence of Ombudsman offices;
- fostering affiliation and maintain liaison with other Ombudsman Offices, Institutes and Associations, international bodies and organizations interested in the progress of Ombudsman activities and Human Rights;
- Identifying and carry our any other relevant activities which the members may deem appropriate.

AOMA is also expanding its communication scope at international forums since it increases the participation of African Ombudsman Offices in voicing an African agenda at international level. It also creates awareness among people of the world that AOMA is playing a significant role in the efforts made to secure peace and stability in Africa and coordinates the efforts paid by AOMA to promoting Ombudsman philosophy. The official approval of the MoU signed between AOMA and the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) is believed to scale up their relation to a further step since the central point around which it was established shows their mutually advantageous and cooperative relationship. Since they share similar objectives to strengthen the concept of ombudsmanship, and encouraging existing and new ombudsman institutions in their work of assisting, enhancing and protecting civil and human rights, the agreement aimed at "sharing best practices in the field of control of public administration and protection and promotion of human rights".

Finally, the General Assembly adopted the amendment of the Constitution and elected members of the Executive Committee that will run the Association for the next term.

This is a step forward for the AOMA to coordinating to incorporate the various activities of its member Institutions so as to help create a combined effort capable of assuming a strong hold in the endeavour to create government bodies who hold account of what they do, in a way it is transparent based on the rule of law in view to realizing good governance and human rights across the continent. It is also an encouraging stride that AOMA is looking forward to an open end in the endeavour to succeed its objectives.