



## **The African Ombudsman to strengthen Political Stability and Socio-Economic Development in the continent.**



**Addis Ababa, 4 November 2014:** The President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Dr. Mulatu Teshome, on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> November, highlighted his government's active support to the noble work of the African Ombudsman in advocating for good governance, rule of law, transparency and accountability of state governments. Officially opening the first African Ombudsman and Mediators Association (AOMA) and African Union Commission (AUC) Bilateral Conference and AOMA General Assembly at the African Union headquarters in Addis

Ababa-Ethiopia, Dr. Teshome called upon other African Governments to recognize the Institution of the Ombudsman in their constitutional structures in order to enable their smooth work towards influencing countries' development.

The three-day conference, held under the theme **“Enhancing Political Stability and Socio Economic Development through Good Governance and Administrative Justice”**, has brought under one roof heads of Ombudsman Institutions from across Africa and key representatives of the AUC. It aims to look at how the Ombudsman Institution, through its role in promoting, strengthening and upholding good governance, human rights, respect for the rule of law, and administrative justice, can work hand in hand with the AUC in enhancing political stability and socio-economic development.

Also speaking during the official opening of the conference, the President of the AOMA and Ombudsman of Angola, Dr Paulo Tjipilica, appealed to the AU to raise governments' awareness about the value that the work of Ombudsman Institutions can add to their administrations. He said Ombudsman Institutions could be instrumental in dealing with conflicts through mediation, observation of elections and anything that concerns the rights, freedoms and guarantees of citizens.

Delivering a message of support, the President of the International Ombudsman Institution and Ombudsman of Namibia, Adv. John Walters, supported calls for governments to strengthen existing Ombudsman Institutions and for states that had not yet created such institutions to do so. He said this is important because citizens have rights to good governance and proper

administration, a right to complain and a right to access an Ombudsman, an institution he stressed no government could do without.

AOMA Executive Secretary and Public Protector of South Africa, Adv. Thuli Madonsela, said many African countries were at crossroads with regard to good governance, democracy and peace as some were still grappling with learning that what is lawful is not necessarily proper, good and right in governance processes. She was, however, encouraged that the AU recognised the "untapped potential" of the Ombudsman for strengthening good governance through identifying and remedying administrative wrongs in states' affairs and thus improving public accountability and administrative justice.

In her opening remarks, H.E. Mrs. Fozia Amin, the Chief Ombudsman of Ethiopia, using an example of the Ethiopian Institution of Ombudsman, noted that institutions of Ombudsman have helped to build good governance, democracy and rule of law in the continent. "The establishment of a national ombudsman institution in Ethiopia is a breakthrough in terms of filling historical gaps and in providing a better and promising future in the promotion of good governance and protecting the constitutionally sanctioned rule of law and human rights" she said.



On the other hand, speaking on behalf of the African Union Commission (AUC) Commissioner for Political Affairs, H.E. Mr. Olabisi Dare, the Acting Director for Political Affairs of the AUC, stressed that the AUC values the work done by the Institutions of Ombudsman in the Continent in stabilizing peace, security and social stability and that the Commission is ready to work to its capacity with the African Ombudsman and Mediators Association (AOMA) towards achieving the AU aim of silencing guns in the continent by 2020.

The AOMA and AUC Bilateral Conference is being held at a point where Africa is still engulfed in political upheavals in some parts of the continent which have led to a decline of some governments in countries like Libya, Egypt and recently in Burkina Faso.

While the major part of the Conference would deal with matters pertaining to AOMA/AU Cooperation, the last part of the Conference would consist of AOMA's General Assembly's plenary session, so as to seal the recommendations and decisions arising from the bilateral conference into formal adoptions by the Assembly. The Assembly, AOMA's highest decision making structure, at which a new Executive Committee is elected, is held every four years. AOMA will also use the opportunity to ratify the OR Tambo Declaration for Minimum Standards for Ombudsman Institutions, a ground-breaking governance instrument declared in February 2014 at a conference held in Kempton Park, South Africa. The Declaration provides for minimum standards for effective Ombudsman Institutions and Cooperation.

AOMA is a regional organization for ombudsman and mediators in Africa. At present 39 African states are members of AOMA. The objectives of the AOMA are to encourage the establishment of African ombudsman institutions, to provide information, training and

development of ombudsman offices and staff, to promote good governance, to promote the independence and autonomy of ombudsman offices and to foster affiliation and maintain liaison between ombudsman offices and other relevant institutions and organizations.

The association holds the status of an Observer within the AU and the two organizations signed a bilateral cooperation agreement in October 2011. The agreement aimed to establish cooperation in promoting the strategic priorities of the AUC in the realm of Democracy, Good Governance – including the promotion and protection of human rights, transparency and Administrative justice, Observations of Elections in Africa, and peace and Security.



In April this year, the Chair of the AUC, H.E. Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma received an audience from a delegation led by Dr Tjipilica at the occasion of the presentation of the credentials of AOMA's new Permanent Representative at the AU. Among other matters discussed, the two presidents agreed that AOMA's 4th General Assembly Meeting be organized in Addis Ababa at an agreeable calendar, which, as requested by the AUC Chairperson, should preferably allow her to be present at the proceedings.

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