



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

REPORT

LESSONS FROM THE IOI BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING AND SUMARY OF KEY DECISIONS AFFECTING AOMA

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1. FOREWORD

At its Executive Committee Meeting in Addis Ababa between 15 and 16 September 2011, the African Ombudsman and Mediators Association (AOMA) took a resolution to send the Executive Secretary and President of the Association to the IOI Board of Directors Meeting to be held in Livingstone Zambia.

The Executive Secretary and President attended the meeting on 2 November 2011 in the company of the AORC Secretariat during which a number of lessons and observations were made as well as major progress towards the formalisation of relations between AOMA and IOI resulted.

2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Executive Committee of AOMA expresses its heartfelt appreciation to the host of the IOI Board of Directors meeting, Ms Caroline Sokoni, the Investigator General Zambia, for ensuring that AOMA EXCO is invited to the august event.

EXCO would also like to thank the IOI Board of Directors for accommodating us in the said meeting and allowing our team to sit in their meetings wherewith valuable observations were made and lessons that we share here were picked.

Last but not least, the presence of the president of AOMA, Dr Paulo Tjipilica and IOI members partners who generously contributed financially and otherwise to make the launch of AORC the resounding success it was. AOMA will continue to count on your support to make AORC the best Ombudsman research centre in the world.

EXCO would also like to thank the staff of the Public Protector South Africa, UKZN, GIZ, Office of the Premier of KZN, eThekweni Municipality, Departments of Justice & Constitutional Development, International Relations, Police and Presidency for their hard work and dedication. A word of thanks also goes to the Tourism Kwazulu-Natal for the memorabilia provided to AOMA members and Professor Mandla Mchunu is also saluted for the sterling job he did in steering the proceedings of the launch. You have made AOMA, South Africa and Africa proud.

3. BACKGROUND

The Executive Committee (EXCO) of the African Ombudsman and Mediators Association (AOMA) decided to launch the African Ombudsman Research Centre (AORC) at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (UKZN) in South Africa on the 15 March 2011.

The goal and objectives of the project were to launch and establish the AORC and ensure that the Centre's staff was appointed to ensure that it commences with its business.

3.1 WHAT IS AORC

The African Ombudsman Research Centre (AORC) is the resource and archive centre of the African Ombudsman and Mediators Association (AOMA) situated at the University of Kwazulu-Natal, Howard College Campus.

The aim of the African Ombudsman Association Research Centre serves as a focal point for ombudsman offices in Africa, by coordinating their activities and supporting them with the provision of information and training, and acting as a point of liaison with all participants involved in enhancing corporate governance in Africa.

The role of AORC is to provide the following services to AOMA members and Ombudsman institutions:

- Information and research
- Training
- Coordination
- Advocacy

3.2 WHAT IS AOMA

The African Ombudsman and Mediators Association (AOMA) is an organisation of Ombudsman and Mediators across the African continent.

Established in 2003, AOMA currently boasts 36 members straddling the six regions (Northern, Eastern, Central, West, Southern and Indian Ocean) of Africa and efforts are ongoing to encourage those countries who are not yet members of AOMA to swell the ranks of the growing movement for good governance and the rule of law across our continent.

AOMA's objectives are to:

- Encourage the establishment, development and promotion of African Ombudsman institutions.
- Further mutual support, co-operation and joint activity through information sharing, training and development of Ombudsman and staff.
- Promote good governance - including the observance of human rights, transparency and administrative justice.
- Support and promote the autonomy and independence of Ombudsman offices.
- Foster affiliation and maintain liaison with other Ombudsman offices, Institutes and Associations, international bodies and organisations interested in the progress of Ombudsman activities and human rights.
- Identify and carry out any other relevant activities that members deem appropriate.

4. LAUNCH OVERVIEW

The launch of the AORC was combined with the EXCO meeting as well as a needs assessment workshop as a four-day programme commencing from the 14 to 17 March 2011. In essence, AOMA held a series of events, namely: meeting of the Executive Committee of AOMA that lasted for 1½ days, official launch of the AORC and a needs assessment Workshop for 1½ days with a view to launching the AORC.

The venue for the launch was the University of Kwazulu-Natal, Howard College whilst the venue for the EXCO meeting and the needs assessment workshop was the UKZN Innovation Centre.

For accommodation, Civic Reception and Gala Dinner, the Coastland Ridge Hotel was utilised. The hotel was strategically situated in close proximity to the Howard College and the Innovation Centre, which were used for the launch, AOMA Executive meeting and the needs assessment workshop, respectively.

The major stakeholders for the launch and establishment of the Centre were:

- African Renaissance Fund. The Government of the Republic of South Africa, through the African Renaissance Fund (ARF) of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), together with the German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ) through the Tri-lateral Cooperation Fund have committed to funding the AORC in the amount of R1 5000 00.00 for a period of 3 Years.
- GIZ. Organised and facilitated the needs assessment workshop.
- University of Kwazulu-Natal (UKZN). Memorandum of agreement was signed between AOMA and UKZN for the purpose of regularising the establishment and running of AORC on the UKZN premises.
- The Kwazulu-Natal Provincial Government hosted a Gala Dinner whilst the eThekweni Municipality hosted a Civic Reception for AOMA members and guests. Kwazulu-Natal Tourism provided memorabilia items for AOMA members.

5. LESSONS FROM THE IOI BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

LESSONS FROM IOI BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING & KEY DECISIONS

The programme including the launch was designed to take place for the period of four working days. All three events/activities took place sequentially from the 14th to the 17th March 2011.

5.1 LAUNCH EVENT

6. Background, overview and current affairs of IOI obtained firsthand.
7. There will be IOI benefits from closer ties with AOMA because of its reach in Africa, and its better understanding of issues within the region.
8. AOMA must note the criteria imposed by IOI insofar as membership is concerned; especially their drive to increase accessibility, while adhering to stringent qualifications.
9. AOMA must study the amendments to the IOI By-laws when introducing amendments to its Constitution.
10. Very useful information gleaned for AORC as regards the history, teething problems and current functioning of the IOI Permanent Secretariat in Vienna.
11. Opportunities provided by host (Zambian Ombudsman) for formal and informal networking and exchange.
12. IOI Board seems to function effectively through the creation of Sub-committees that focus on various aspects of its work, e.g training.
13. Privy to early preparations for IOI World Conference at the end of 2012, which provided some useful insights as we prepare for the AOMA General Assembly in Mali in February 2012.

6. CONCLUSION

Whilst the launch was a resounding success that profiled both AOMA and AORC, much work still needs to be done in the quest to promote good governance and the respect for the rule of law across Africa.

AOMA needs to double its efforts to encourage those countries that do not have ombudsman offices to establish them and provide them with as much support as possible. The drive to acquire recognition by AOMA by governments across the continent needs also to be escalated and the association needs to do more to get recognition from continental bodies like the African Union and the African Human Rights Commission.