



MEDIA STATEMENT

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For immediate release

Heads of African Ombudsman institutions urged to play part in realization of continental development targets

Heads of Public Protector-like institutions from across Africa, who are meeting this week at the Southern Sun Hotel in Pretoria, have been urged to do their bit in ensuring the continent realizes its development goals.

Representing 11 countries, they are attending the Executive Committee (EXCO) of the African Ombudsman and Mediators Association (AOMA), 39-member organisation established in 2003 to enhance good governance in the continent.

In addition to attending the EXCO – the association’s highest decision-making forum in between biennial General Assemblies – they are in the South African capital to participate in a board meeting of the association’s Research Centre (AORC).

The AORC is a University of KwaZulu-Natal based resource of AOMA that was launched by President Jacob Zuma in 2011 to provide training, research support and advocacy services to the association. It is fully funded by the South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation (Dirco) through the African Renaissance Fund and managed by the Public Protector South Africa.

During a gala dinner hosted by Public Protector Adv. Busisiwe Mkhwebane on Tuesday, keynote speaker Prof. Arthur Mutambara told guests that African ombudsman community has its work cut out in relation to helping the continent leave up to its Agenda 2063 vision.

The ambitious 50-year vision of the African Union (AU) seeks to achieve, among other things; good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law; peace and security; prosperity, inclusive growth and sustainable development.

Prof. Mutambara, who is a onetime Zimbabwean Vice Prime Minister and President of the African News Agency, called on the different African countries as represented at the dinner to work together as a collective in order to play a meaningful role in seeing to it that all seven aspirations of Agenda 2063 are realized.

“It is important to understand that collective success is more important than individual success ... If we work together we can ensure that we achieve the goals set out in Agenda 2063,” he said, adding that it was important for organisations such as AOMA to work with the AU towards achieving continental development objectives.

Speaking in her capacity as the AORC board chairperson and host, Adv. Mkhwebane said the institution of the Ombudsman in Africa had a great potential to make a significant contribution towards the realization of Agenda 2063.

Arguing that this potential was largely yet to be tapped into, she said reversing the negatives that often crop out of studies such as the Ibrahim Index of African Governance while building on the positives was one of the ways to contribute towards efforts aimed at turning Agenda 2063 into a reality.

Adv. Mkhwebane said the EXCO and board meeting provided a platform for attendees to engage on matters that seek to advance the cause of good governance, respect for the rule of law and the upholding of human rights in the continent through the work of the institution of the ombudsman.

“We should work hard to ensure that, when the history of this continent is retold post 2063, its authors find it extremely difficult to ignore the key role that would have been played by the institution of the Ombudsman in turning the land mass that lies between Cape and Cairo into ‘The Africa We Want’,” she said.

Also speaking at the event was Dirco’s Deputy Director-General for Global Governance and Continental Agenda, His Excellency, Ambassador Mxolisi Nkosi, who underlined the important role that AOMA has to play to ensure responsible governance in the continent.

He called on African Ombudsman institutions to discuss and air their views on corruption and how the malady was, in his view, holding the continent back.

Among the dignitaries in attendance were AOMA President and Ombudsman of Ethiopia Ms. Fozia Amin and AOMA Secretary-General and Head of the Kenyan Commission for Administrative Justice, Ms Regina Mwatha, both of whom presented reports to EXCO. There was also Pannan Coulibaly, who is AOMA’s first Vice President and Ombudsman of Cote d’Ivoire.

Apart from South Africa, Ethiopia, Kenya and Cote d’Ivoire, the attendants included heads of Ombudsman Institutions from Chad, Madagascar, Angola, Namibia, Botswana, Malawi, and Burkina Faso.

Ends

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