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**9TH ORDINARY SESSION OF
THE LABOUR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
COMMISSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION
11– 12 APRIL 2013
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

LSAC/MIN/REPORT (IX)

**THEME: “Enhancing the Capacity of Labour Market
Institutions in Africa to meet the Current and Future
Challenges”**

REPORT OF THE MINISTERS’ MEETING

REPORT OF THE MINISTERS' MEETING OF THE 9THORDINARY SESSION OF THE LABOUR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, 11- 12 APRIL 2013

INTRODUCTION

1. The Ministers' Meeting of the 9th Ordinary Session of the African Union Labour and Social Affairs Commission (LSAC9) was held at the African Union Conference Centre, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 11 to 12 April 2013. The theme of the Conference was "***Enhancing the Capacity of the Labour Market Institutions in Africa to meet the Current and Future Challenges***".

ATTENDANCE

2. The Ministers' Meeting was attended by Member States' Representatives and Social Partners from the following AU Member States, some of which did not include social partners in their delegations: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Twenty-five (25) delegations were headed by Ministers.

3. The following AU Organs, Regional Economic Communities, Inter-Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations and cooperating partners were represented: Business Africa, Conférence Internationale de la Prévoyance Sociale (CIPRES), World Association of Public Employment Services (WAPES), Women in Informal Employment-Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), African Association of Public Employment Services, Swedish Public Employment Service, World Solidarity International, Centre Regional Africain de l'Administration du Travail (CRADAT), Southern African Trade Union Co-ordination Council (SATUCC), International Labour Office (ILO), International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-AFRICA), Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Common Market for Eastern and Southern African Africa (COMESA); International Organization on Migration (IOM) Intergovernmental Authority Development (IGAD), East African Community (EAC), Economic Commission of Central African States (ECCAS), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNWOMEN, UNECA, African Development Bank, World Bank, UNFPA, WHO, Embassy of the State of Palestine, Embassy of the United States of America; EU Delegation to the AU, US Agency for International Development (USAID).

OFFICIAL OPENING

4. A Representative for the Workers, Mr. Owei LAKEMA stressed the need for the LSAC to ensure its tripartite nature is respected and that delegations not meeting this requisite composition be sanctioned at future sessions. He emphasized the

importance of an educated workforce and highlighted the current challenges that workers face in exercising their fundamental rights.

5. **The Employers Representative, Mr.AzadJeetun (Business Africa)**noted that the LSAC is a model of consultation, pertinent to sustainable development. Hence annual meetings must be held. He underscored the need for increasing investment in human capital as a necessary element of an environment conducive for developing the private sector.

6. The **ILO Regional Director for Africa, Mr. Charles Dan**highlighted the positive economic growth projections for Africa over the next two decades, but stressed the importance of macro-economic and labour market policies that promote both economic and social development. With reference to youth development, Mr Dan stressed the importance of the right mix of both macro-economic and labour market policies to foster youth employment creation. He also underscored the importance of inclusive and sustainable development and thus the move in the right direction by including the promotion of decent work and improved access to social protection in the post 2015 development agenda.

7. **H.E Dr. Adrienne Diop, Commissioner for Human Development and Gender, ECOWAS Commission,** briefed the meeting on initiatives and achievements by the regional body in enhancing labour, employment and social affairs programmes. Among others, she mentioned the ECOWAS Tripartite Social Dialogue Forum, the ECOWAS Social Security Convention and its Administrative Arrangements and the ECOWAS Youth Employment Action Plan adopted in 2012 to address challenges of youth unemployment. Initiatives are also underway to tackle challenges of trafficking in drugs and human trafficking.H.E Commissioner Diop, however, regretted the growing prevalence of Child Labour in West Africa worsened by high levels of poverty, illiteracy, urbanisation, armed conflicts and political instability.

8. In His address, the **AU Commissioner for Social Affairs, H.E Dr. Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko** highlighted key challenges faced by the continent which are low productivity and increasing intra and inter-regional labour migration. The Commissioner said it was imperative to address productivity issues by accelerating implementation of the AU Productivity Agenda for Africa as well as the AU Migration Policy Framework, taking into account relevant ILO conventions and International Organization on Migration policies. He challenged Member States to strive to fulfil their commitment to reducing youth and women unemployment by 2 % annually. Dr. Kaloko encouraged Africa to take advantage of the informal sector in developing innovative job market systems. To this end, an observatory on informal economy could be established laying the groundwork for an African Centre on the Informal Economy.

9. In her statement, the outgoing Chairperson of the LSAC8, **Hon. Doreen Sioka (Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Republic of Namibia)** briefed delegates on activities of the LSAC Bureau since 2011. She highlighted efforts to forge unity among Member States through the articulation of African Common positions to the ILC. The Minister proposed that the incoming Bureau appoints a working group to co-ordinate Africa's broader campaign for ILO's 1986 Instrument of Amendment to the ILO Constitution. Hon Sioka concluded her remarks by supporting the inclusion

of full and productive employment and decent work as a central goal of the post 2015 Development Agenda.

Agenda Item 1: PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A.) Election of the Bureau

10. After due consultation, the Ministers elected the Bureau for the LSAC9 as follows:

Chairperson:	Libya	(North Africa, Government)
1 st Vice Chairperson:	Zimbabwe	(Southern Africa, Government)
2 nd Vice Chairperson:	Cameroon	(Central Africa, Workers)
3 rd Vice Chairperson:	Ethiopia	(East Africa, Employers)
Rapporteur:	Mali	(West Africa, Government)

11. In his acceptance remarks, the incoming Chairperson of LSAC9, **Hon. Mohamed Swalem, Minister of Labour, Libya**, thanked Ethiopia for their hospitality and expressed the trust that the LSAC9 would address the challenges in labour and employment on the Continent.

B.) Adoption of the Agenda and Programme of Work

12. The meeting adopted the agenda and programme of work for the meeting including an item on, “The situation of Workers in Palestine” and a briefing by the AUC on the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the OAU/AU.

Agenda Item 2: PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE THEME OF THE CONFERENCE

13. A Ministerial panel discussion was held on the theme of the 9th Ordinary Session, namely, **“Enhancing the Capacity of the Labour Market Institutions in Africa to meet the Current and Future Challenges”**. Mr. Charles Dan, the Regional Director of ILO moderated the panel discussion. The Panelists were the Hon. Minister of Labour of South Africa, Ms Mildred Oliphant and the Hon. Minister of Labour and Social Security of Cameroon, Mr. OWONA Grégoire, H.E. Dr. Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko, Commissioner for Social Affairs, presented a summary of the panel discussion on the theme of the Experts’ meeting.

14. The South-African Minister of Labour made an introduction on the topic of social dialogue. Social dialogue is essential to meet the economic challenges of African nations. Social Dialogue institutions are instrumental for government, labour, trade unions, business and community organizations to cooperate and build consensus on economic growth, productivity, education and skills development, industrial, social, labour and development issues.

She provided some specific examples on the functioning of social dialogue in South Africa by describing the work of the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) that plays a key role in the definition and implementation of employment policies.

15. The aim of social dialogue should be to achieve consensus on essential issues and to enable communication amongst the various stakeholders to be improved. An operational social dialogue strengthens labour market effectiveness and support sustainable and inclusive growth.

16. For his part, the Cameroonian Minister of Labour and Social Security, introduced the topic of Public Employment Services (PES) and the labour markets information systems. He thought those policies were in line with the findings of 2004 Ouagadougou Plan of Action on Employment Promotion and Poverty Alleviation. Public Employment Services could help fight against unemployment but also contribute to create a social protection basis for all. The PESs were weak in implementing employment policies and should therefore be technically and financially reinforced. Labour market information systems were often inefficient and did not enable decision-makers to provide adequate responses to unemployment problems. The government of Cameroon has taken a number of measures in response to those problems; these include the creation of a national employment council, a one stop center for the integration of youths, and various funds for the promotion of employment and the facilitation of pro jobs investments. By way of conclusion, the honourable Minister opened discussion on the way of mobilizing resources, the types of cooperation to put in place at national, regional and continental levels, and the types of institutional reforms needed.

17. The moderator opened the discussion for all the delegates. Twelve delegations took part in the discussion.

18. Most of the countries confirmed their interest for an operational social dialogue that upholds social partners' rights. Some countries have even protected the rights of social partners through provisions in their constitution. Social dialogue should address all the essential issues such as remuneration, work conditions, occupational health, social protection and labour security, training and support to SMEs and Very Small Enterprises (VSEs), support to pro jobs investment, inclusive growth and informal economy, etc.

19. Many delegations called upon the Member States to share good practices amongst themselves. Delegations could exchange visits to see how the other Member States addressed some labour market challenges.

20. As far as social dialogue is concerned, the fundamental issue of representativeness was also raised. Mechanisms such as regular professional elections can be established to ensure that the people representing social partners are representative enough to sign industry-wide or national agreements.

21. Many questions were raised on the status of informal workers and on the best way to involve them in social dialogue so as to secure adequate social protection for them.

22. The discussions also focused on the issue of labour markets information systems. Some countries made a lot of effort to streamline data collection. Collecting data on labour market is very important not only to better meet the need of the labour market, but also to define effective and targeted employment policies. To this end, there is need to build the capacity of the relevant institutions in order to enable them to fulfill their mission.

23. The moderator concluded the discussions and announced the launching of the AfDB-AU-ILO-ECA joint initiative on youth and women employment during a lunch for all the delegates.

24. Further to the panel discussions on the theme of the Conference, in both the Experts' and Ministerial Meetings, the Ministers made the following **decisions**:

- (a) Capacity of Member States should be built to establish effective Labour Market Institutions;
- (b) Legislative frameworks on public employment services should be developed, guided by relevant ILO conventions;
- (c) The labour productivity concept should be rephrased, and connected to labour market institutions and capacity building initiatives and the methodology should be aligned with international best practices;
- (d) Public employment services should include employment promotion;
- (e) Access to the labour markets for job seekers should be facilitated;
- (f) Opportunities for new entrants to gain work experience should be provided,
- (g) Employment prospects particularly for vulnerable groups, should be enhanced;
- (h) Member States should increase budgetary allocations to public employment services;
- (i) Countries of origin, Partners, the European Union and other countries of destination should be engaged to address the challenges of irregular migration especially in relation to human rights violations of migrant workers and human trafficking;
- (j) Regulations should be enforced on private employment agencies, both local and foreign;
- (k) Periodic national labour force surveys should be conducted to take stock of available skills while also identifying skills gaps;
- (l) Resources should be made available to the informal economy to include education and training, capital for business development and for the construction of socio-economic infrastructure;
- (m) An African Centre for the Informal Economy should be established;

Agenda Item 3:PREPARATION FOR THE SPECIAL SESSION ON THE OUAGADOUGOU 2004 DECLARATION AND PLAN OF ACTION ON EMPLOYMENT PROMOTION AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION

25. The meeting decided to treat this item in the context of consideration of the Experts' Report.

Agenda Item 4:CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE EXPERTS' REPORT

The Report of the AUC Chairperson on the implementation of the Decisions of the 8th Ordinary Session of the AU Labour and Social Affairs Commission

26. The Ministers made the following **decisions** regarding the Report of the AUC Chairperson:

- (a) RECs should consider the issue of regional labour migration as an important factor in sustainable development;
- (b) The Commission is requested to consider specific legal frameworks on Labour administration and social protection which should be aimed at the harmonisation of labour and social protection frameworks;

Biennial follow-up Report on the Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation of the 2004 Ouagadougou Declaration and Plan of Action

27. Regarding the Biennial Report, the meeting made the following **decisions**:

- (i) Member States and RECs that have not submitted the Biennial Report should do so by September 2013. Workers and Employers should be consulted to ensure that their countries submit the report on time and before the September deadline. Member States that have already submitted are encouraged to submit an update.
- (ii) The AU Commission is requested to produce a comprehensive report based on the submission from Member States.

The draft Youth and Women Employment Pact

28. After discussion, the meeting made the following **decisions** regarding the draft Pact:

- (a) Employment for youth and women and decent work should be promoted in accordance with the ILO requirements, within an innovative approach;
- (b) The AU should avoid burdening Member States with reporting requirements and the Guidelines should not merely repeat those on youth and women employment already contained in the 2004 Ouagadougou Plan of Action;
- (c) As a pact usually contains agreed actions, these should be narrated clearly;
- (d) The pact should make provision for education, training and skills development;
- (e) Continental, regional and national strategies on promotion of youth and Womenemployment strategies should be harmonised, taking into consideration regional and national peculiarities;

The Intra African Technical Cooperation Platform

29. The meeting made the following **decisions** regarding the Platform:

- (a) Capacity building for labour inspectors, social security and placement professionals as well as other labour market professionals should be prioritised;
- (b) The capacity of existing regional skills training institutions (ARLAC, CRADAT, ACLAE) should be strengthened;
- (c) Member States should share resources, knowledge and skills in the areas of labour, social protection and employment;

The Communication Strategy for the Implementation of the SPIREWORK

30. The meeting considered the Communication Strategy and made the following **decisions**:

- (a) The strategy should consider existing strategies, experiences and best practices from Africa and other regions of the world that endeavoured to expand social protection to the working poor;
- (b) Informal economy and rural workers have to be included in the implementation of the communication strategy as they are by and large excluded;
- (c) The strategy should have a long-term vision to ensure its impact;
- (d) Social partners should be at the core of the strategy, rather than relegated to the margins;
- (e) Targets and indicators need to be identified and developed by the Technical Working Group on Employment and Informal Economy for monitoring and evaluation purposes on SPIREWORK, social protection, social cohesion and productivity;
- (f) Targets and indicators need to be identified for monitoring and evaluation purposes;
- (g) Capacity building should be conducted for the implementation strategy, and annual surveys should be undertaken to ensure that the strategy is up-to-date and relevant;
- (h) Tools, approaches, coordination and analyses should be harmonised to ensure credible information and effective activities;
- (i) A concerted effort should be made to place the informal sector on the agenda of the ILC.

The Progress Report on the Implementation of the Labour Market Harmonization and Coordination Framework

31. The meeting took note of the report and adopted the following **decisions**:

- (i) That paragraph six should read as “tripartite” not technical, as it excludes other role players;
- (ii) That national labour force surveys be conducted and coordinated at regional and national levels should take into account the nature of households and labour markets in Africa;
- (iii) The questionnaire should reflect the peculiarity of different regions and countries of Africa.
- (iv) The questionnaire for data gathering should contain a section on grievances and disputes;

Report on Activities of the African Members of the ILO Governing Body

32. Pursuant to the discussions, the meeting made the following **decisions**:

- (i) African countries that have not yet done so, be encouraged to ratify the Amendment of the 1986 Instrument of the ILO Constitution;
- (ii) The African Group positions on the Sections and segments of the Governing Body (GB) be included in the report;
- (iii) The African GB Members provide brief summaries and way forward on the various sections and segments for which they have served as Spokespersons;

- (iv) The election of the GB members should be placed on the agenda of the Special Session of the LSAC in 2014, and the Special Session should take place prior to the ILC in 2014. Sub-regions should finalise their nominations for submission and endorsement at the Special Session;
- (v) The agenda of the Special Session of the LSAC in 2014 should be extended to include an item on the preparation for the 103rd ILC in June 2014;
- (vi) The Geneva African Group should cooperate with its counterpart in Addis Ababa to identify both opportunities for strategic positions within international organisations and the appropriate African candidates thereof;
- (vii) A working group on the ratification of the 1986 Amendment should be set up at the level of the African Group in Geneva and extended to Addis Ababa and New York.

A Common Position on Specific Items of the Agenda of the 102nd Session of the International Labour Conference, Geneva, June 2013

33. The meeting made the following **decisions** regarding the Common Position:

- (i) In future sessions of the LSAC, the agenda item on Preparations for the ILC should include a briefing by the ILO on discussion documents for the International Labour Conference (ILC) highlighting key issues and proposals relating to the committee discussions;
- (ii) The African Group preparations for the tripartite consultations on the Committee on the Application of Standards should take place in Geneva prior to the 102nd ILC. Additionally, experts from the ministries should forward their proposals to the Geneva African Group to ensure that all concerns are effectively addressed;
- (iii) Efforts should be made to ensure increased representation of women in national delegations participating in ILO meetings, while fulfilling the requirement of 30% of female members for each delegation;
- (iv) The African GB Members should coordinate draft position papers which should be distributed to Member States. An African group coordination meeting should be held one day prior to the ILC for discussion of the draft positions;
- (v) There is need to explore new strategies to increase the representation of Africans within the ILO such as a fund to support the internship of young Africans with postgraduate degrees in the ILO, with a long term objective of securing jobs in the ILO..

34. In the preparation for the ILC committees, the following countries expressed interest in representing the African Group as Spokespersons and /or Chair of the technical committees of the ILC:

- Nigeria expressed interest in representing the African Group as spokesperson for the Committee on Employment and Social Protection in the new demographic context;
- Zambia expressed interest in representing the African group as spokesperson for the Committee on Sustainable Development, Decent Work and Green jobs;

- Zimbabwe expressed interest in Chairing the Committee on Employment and Social Protection in the new demographic context, adding that if Africa is not allocated the chairmanship of this committee then Zimbabwe would be interested in serving as spokesperson to the said committee;
- Sudan expressed interest in chairing the Committee on Sustainable Development, Decent Work and Green jobs;
- Cameroon expressed interest in representing the African Group as Spokesperson on the Committee on Social Dialogue;

The African Common Position on the Post 2015 Agenda

35. After considering the Common Position, the meeting made the following **decisions** regarding the African Common Position:

- (a) A separate independent pillar (development outcome or priority) on full and productive employment and decent work, supported by social protection, should be added;
- (b) The Labour and Social Affairs Commission and social partners should be fully involved at national level and with the AUC in the development of the Post 2015 MDGs and in all future Common Positions related to labour and employment;

Preparation for the Special Session on the 2004 Ouagadougou Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment Promotion and Poverty Alleviation

36. The Ministerial meeting **decided** the following regarding the Special Session:

- (a) Member States and RECs that have not submitted their Biennial Reports should do so by September 2013. Workers and Employers should be consulted at national level and ensure that their countries submit the report on time and before the September deadline. Member States that have already submitted are encouraged to submit an update;
- (b) The AU Commission is requested to produce a comprehensive report based on the submission from Member States;
- (c) In addition, the Commission should conduct a thorough evaluation of the implementation of the 2004 Ouagadougou Plan of Action;
- (d) The Special Session should also be used to prepare for the ILC in 2014, particularly to resolve the issues of candidates for elections into ILO GB;
- (e) The Bureau should take an active role in developing the agenda for the Special Session;
- (f) Employment of Persons with Disabilities should be on the agenda of the Special Session;
- (g) An agenda item of the Special Session should be, “the transformation of the informal to the formal economy” as decided by the ILO GB for a two year standard setting discussion, commencing in 2014. The AUC should survey the practices in Member States with regard to this topic;

- (h) The AUC should prepare a list of policy instruments that have been adopted by Member States and at the LSAC sessions after 2004 that would have affected the implementation of the 2004 Ouagadougou Declaration and Plan of Action;
- (i) Assessments must be done in sub-regions on the implementation of the Plan of Action;
- (j) The Special Session of the LSAC should be held in as a prelude to a Extra-ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Governments, in September 2014, to mark 10 years after the 2004 Ouagadougou Summit. The Summit would reaffirm job creation and decent work in the Post 2015 Development Agenda;
- (k) The Special Session of the LSAC should take place in April 2014, preceding the ILC;
- (l) Burkina Faso and Namibia expressed interest in hosting the Special Session and the Summit. Following consultation between the two Member States, the meeting adopted the final following final decision:
 - Namibia will host the Special Session of the LSAC in April 2014 and
 - Burkina Faso will host the Extraordinary Summit in September 2014.

The AUC-AFDB-ILO-ECA Joint Initiative on Youth Employment

37. Further to the launch of the above initiative, the meeting **decided** that the LSAC9 underscores the importance of the Joint Initiative and requests partners to accelerate formalizing it and for the AUC to present it to the Executive Council and the Assembly in May 2013.

BRIEFINGS BY RECS, SOCIAL PARTNERS, AU SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND INTER-AFRICAN ORGANIZATIONS

38. The meeting took note that the Experts' meeting received briefings from the following RECs: IGAD, ECOWAS, ECCAS and COMESA. The RECs reported to the meeting on their respective activities.

39. The following Social Partners presented summaries of their reports to the Experts' meeting: ITUC-Africa, OATUU and Business Africa. The Social Partners recommended a review of the working methods of the LSAC to make it more effective as a tripartite body.

Items presented by Member States

40. The Meeting took note of the following items that were presented by Member States:

- i) Presentation by Algeria on a draft resolution of the Labour and Social Affairs Commission to support the establishment of a Higher School for Social Security in Algiers. The meeting supported the initiative undertaken by the Algerian Government.
- ii) Presentation by Egypt on the establishment of an e-African Labour Market Information System on line.

Date and Venue of the LSAC10

41. The meeting considered the venue of the 10th Ordinary Session of the AU Labour and Social Affairs Commission. Libya offered to host the LSAC10 and the offer was unanimously accepted with gratitude.

Agenda Item 5: SITUATION OF WORKERS IN PALESTINE

42. The representative of the State of Palestine thanked AU Member States for their support to the country and reiterated the oppressive measures that workers are subjected to. He elaborated on the increasing rates of unemployment and poverty and deteriorating economic situation of his country. The representative alluded to the draft resolution on the situation of workers in Palestine which was circulated and adopted. The Commission expressed support and solidarity with the People of Palestine and adopted the Resolution.

Agenda Item 6: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

43. The meeting considered one item under Any Other Business:

(i) Briefing by H.E. Dr. M.S. Kaloko, AU Commissioner of Social Affairs on the upcoming Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the African Union, under the theme of Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance, which will run from 25 May 2013 to 25 May 2014. It was emphasized that Ethiopia will take a major role in the celebrations and that there are different monthly themes. Member States are encouraged to hold discussions, football matches, etc. During the upcoming Summit in May 2013, cultural displays and a colloquium will be held, among others.

The Commission took note of the briefing.

Agenda Item 7: ADOPTION OF THE MINISTERS' REPORT

44. The Ministers meeting adopted its report subject to corrections to be incorporated.

OFFICIAL CLOSING

45. On behalf of the Conference, **Hon. Mr. Modeste BAHATI LUKWEBO, Minister of Labour and Social Security of the Democratic Republic of Congo**, expressed his gratitude to the Government and people of Ethiopia, H.E Dr. DlaminiZuma, Chairperson of the AUC, Dr. Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko, Commissioner for Social Affairs and the outgoing Bureau of the Labour and Social Affairs Commission for the holding of the Session. The Hon. Minister congratulated the Bureau of the 9th Session of the Labour and Social Affairs Commission and thanked the delegates for their active participation in the meeting.

46. **H.E. Dr. Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko, AU Commissioner for Social Affairs** thanked the Ministers for their contributions and assured them that their decisions and concerns will be taken care of in the service of promoting Africa's labour force.

47. In his closing remarks, **Hon. Mr Muhamed Sawalim, Minister of Labour of Libya**, thanked the Members of the Labour and Social Affairs Commission for

electing him as the Chairperson of the Bureau of the 9th Ordinary Session. He undertook to serve the mandate of the LSAC and work towards the implementation of the decisions and recommendations made during the session to the best of his abilities.