

## **IOI News Item on AOMA EXCO Meeting in Addis Ababa, 15 – 16 September**

### **Contribution by AORC Secretariat**

The Executive Committee of African Ombudsman & Mediators Association (AOMA) gathered in the Sheraton Hotel, Addis Ababa from 15 to 16 September 2011 for an Executive Committee Meeting and the African Ombudsman Research Centre (AORC) Board meeting for the first time following the launch of the Research Centre in Durban South Africa on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2011 in line with the AOMA constitution. The meeting was hosted by the Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman (EIO) led by Honourable Fozia Amin who ensured flawless proceedings from arrival to departure of guest.

The EXCO deliberated on the achievements of AOMA over the past few years as well as establishing a road map into the future. One of the biggest achievements of AOMA is the establishment of Ombudsman Research Centre (AORC) which is hosted by the Law School of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. As such the Executive Secretary's report touched on developments at AORC since its high powered launch in March 2011 as well as tabling the Launch report (herewith attached). EXCO decided the AORC becomes the secretariat which carries out the daily administration of the Association be located at the Research Centre.

EXCO called upon the Research Centre to place AOMA on the map in terms of good governance and human rights work in the continent through research and capacity building of Ombudsman staff as well as interaction with other bodies across the world. This will include coordinating and conducting experience sharing programs among member countries. The Association would like to see the Research Centre studying activities, obligations and challenges of Ombudsman/Mediators institutions across the continent. Some of the duties the Centre is tasked with other than being a secretariat includes (but not limited to):

- Organise training, seminars and short courses on special issues relating to the work of the Ombudsman;

- Establishing standing committees for research and documentation on issues relating to the Ombudsman field, human rights and public administration in general;
- Publication of occasional papers, Ombudsman profiles and a journal promoting the development of the Ombudsman institution;
- Distribution and exchange of documents;
- And, cataloguing, storing and disseminating relevant information concerning the Ombudsman institutions including books, periodicals, reports, court cases, speeches, media responses and annual reports among other things.

It is clear that AOMA would like to see AORC become the pulse of the Association. In this regards, AOMA committed itself to providing any support necessary to the AORC staff for this to become a reality.

Another important recent development in AOMA is the increase of membership to thirty-seven (37) following the joining of Burundi. AOMA seeks to increase its membership to a point where all members of the African Union family are subscribed to the association, its activities as well as the code of conduct which is currently being developed.

Ahead of the EXCO meeting, AOMA was accredited as an observer in the African Union on 13 September 2011, itself not a mean achievement. An African Union Commissioner for Social Affairs, Adv. Gawanas, herself a former Ombudsman for Namibia, attended the EXCO and gave words of support and encouragement to attendees of the meeting. Advocate Gawanas appreciated the role of AOMA towards the building of democracy, protecting of human rights as fight against corruption in the African continent.

Here we provide a summary of some of the key resolutions of the Addis meeting. In line with the constitution of the Association, Mali will host the next General Assembly from 20 – 22 February 2012 under the proposed theme ***“Towards the Consolidation and Strengthening of the African Ombudsman Institutions, Good Governance and Democracy in Africa.”*** It was also resolved that:

- a. The Research Centre will be a vehicle for strengthening the structures of AMOA and to recruit new members to adhere to principles of good governance and the rule of law.

- b.** Pursuant to the accreditation of the Association to the Africa Union, the Honourable Judge Abuzeid Ahmed, Ombudsman of the Republic of Sudan was confirmed as the Association's Ambassador to the AU.
- c.** The idea a Permanent Secretariat to be hosted by Research Centre in South Africa was accepted and will now be tabled for deliberation and possible adoption at the next General Assembly
- d.** AOMA to increase its visibility through involvement in African governance and human rights activities, for instance as Accredited election monitoring officials.
- e.** Increase membership to cover all African Union members, for AOMA to be a pillar of good governance, human rights protection and the fight against corruption.
- f.** Creation of a databank of the AOMA Ombudsman CVs for transmission to the Africa Union for possible invitation to the Africa Union activities or missions in the areas of good governance, democracy and human rights.
- g.** Make efforts to associate and link with other multilateral bodies for participation in work on good governance, democracy, human rights and anti-corruption for example, UNODC; and link with other regional bodies similar to AOMA.
- h.** Regions to call meetings and invite office bearers as part of advocacy. The AORC Secretariat will interact with regions not represented here to organize a general meeting or conference ahead of General Assembly. In these meetings regions should design programmes and collective actions. The West African region has not been represented since April 2010. The Ombudsman of Mali should coordinate a meeting for the West Africa region to nominate regional coordinator, ahead of a regional meeting.
- i.** All AOMA publications by AORC to be widely distributed in all AOMA official languages
- j.** The Executive Secretary and President to host a conference with development partners on urgent basis to solicit funding and/or technical support for the Research Centre so that it is adequately resourced for the tasks given to it.
- k.** The Executive Secretary will invite Zimbabwean, Libyan, South Sudan, Rwandan and Kenyan Ombudsman to the GA in Bamako as well as other members of the African Union family who are yet to establish Ombudsman offices and join the association, so that they can witness the importance of such an institution in delivering their constitutional mandate for deepening democracy and good governance.