



Western Hemisphere African Diaspora Network

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The Western Hemisphere African Diaspora Network (WHADN) delegation attends African Union Summit

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At the invitation of the African Union Commission, The Western Hemisphere African Diaspora Network (WHADN) sent a delegation to represent the network at the 5th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union that took place from 30 June - 3 July 2004 and the 3rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union Summit which took place from July 6-8 2004 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

At the opening session of the Executive Council meeting, the Dean of the African Ambassadors to Ethiopia, H.E. Osman El-Sayed Fadar El-seed of Sudan announced the election of Foreign Minister Olu Adeniji of Nigeria as the new Chair of the 5th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council (replacing the incumbent Foreign Minister Leonardo Simao of Mozambique).

The Executive Council - made up of Foreign Ministers representing each Member State - reviewed and took decisions on issues from a report presented by the Eighth Ordinary Session of the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC). The PRC - which is chaired by H.E. Ana Nemba Uaiene, Permanent Representative of Mozambique to the African Union - acts as the interface between the African Union Commission and the Union.

The Summit agenda – prepared during the Executive Council Meeting - included twenty items on subjects ranging from Peace and Security to sustainable development as well gender and economic integration.

In his farewell speech as chairman of the Union, President Joaquim Chissano thanked his colleagues for their cooperation during his tenure as chairman, and reminded the assembly of the forthcoming Presidential election in Mozambique (in which he will not be a candidate). President Chissano then promised to attend the next Summit meeting as a member of Civil Society, and President Olusegun Obasanjo was called upon to assume the Chairmanship of the 3rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union.

In his speech to the Assembly, Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan advised the leaders of the member States to use prudence in “knowing when to pass the torch to a new generation”. He went on to say that “no government should manipulate or amend the constitution to hold on to office beyond the prescribed term limits that they accepted when they took office” to the applause of hundreds of participants. The United States was also represented during the AU Summit with the participation of the US Ambassador to Ethiopia, H.E. Aurelia E. Brazeal, and newly appointed Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Secretary Constance Berry Newman.

In addition to attending the Executive Council session as well as the AU Summit meeting, the WHADN delegation met with several delegations representing governments, UN agencies, African Union initiatives and Civil Society organizations to discuss areas of mutual interest and cooperation. The delegation also paid a courtesy call in the Office of the Prime Minister of Ethiopia. The delegation was received by the Deputy Prime Minister, H.E. Ato Addisu Legesse, who welcomed the delegation to Ethiopia and requested their cooperation in addressing the key areas of priority for his government. The Deputy Prime Minister disclosed that agriculture development, justice, civil service reform, good governance, democratization and capacity building are all areas that his government is focusing on, and he requested the participation of the Diaspora in facing these important issues. “85 percent of the Ethiopian population lives in the rural areas and depends on agriculture, and 50 percent of that population is made up of women; Therefore, agriculture is a mainstay of the Ethiopian economy contributing about 45 percent of the GDP,” stated the Deputy Prime Minister. After thanking the government of Ethiopia for its hospitality, the leader of the WHADN delegation, Mr. Fred Oladeinde, promised to share with all WHADN membership and other Diaspora groups the information on the government of Ethiopia’s priorities and the establishment of relationship with the government of Ethiopia in engaging the Diaspora as a development partner. Mr. Ron Evans, President of the National Business League (NBL) also presented the Deputy Prime Minister with a gift and pledged the support of NBL in attracting investment from the Diaspora.

Members of the WHADN delegation in attendance during the two sessions included: Fred O. Oladeinde, President, The Foundation for Democracy in Africa; Ronald Williams Evans, President, National Business League; Monica A. Brown, President & CEO, Portfolio Management Group, Ltd.; Alex St. James, Chairman, Africa-US Friendship & Economic Development Group; Marcus Ward, Africa-US Friendship & Economic Development Group; Millicent Obaso, Deputy Director, Adventures in Health Education and Agricultural Development; and Sheila Kibuka, Executive Director, Harambee Africa AIDS Initiative. The delegation was accredited to attend all sessions of the Summit and met with the leadership of the AU Commission, the Union and the other organs of the African Union.