



**Opening message of Fabio Bargiacchi,
Founder and Executive Director of the European Centre for Electoral Support
Statutory meeting of the Executive Committee of the African Association of
Electoral Authorities, Accra, Ghana - 12th-13th May 2022**

Excellency, Honourable Chairwoman of the Ghana Electoral Commission, Madam Jean Mensa, our host of the day

Honourable Chairpersons of the Electoral Commissions of Malawi, Senegal, Mali, Kenya, Central African Republic, and Mozambique,

Justice DR. CHIFUNDO JAIRUS KACHALE, President AMADOU BA, MR. WAFULA CHEBUKATI, DR. MOROUBA MATHIAS BARTHÉLEMY, RIGHT REV. CARLOS SIMAO MATSINHE

Dear Director of the African Union Commission's Democracy and Governance Division, my dear friend Calixte Mbari

Dear colleagues from the AUC 'Electoral and democracy unit, Robert, Karine and Senatek

Dear members and staff of the Ghana National Electoral Commission,

Allow me to bring you the warm greetings of the ECES family.

ECES is an independent, non-partisan and not for profit Foundation headquartered in Brussels with a global remit. ECES was established at the end of 2010 and has implemented activities already in **more than 50 countries**, mainly, but not only, in Africa and the Middle East, primarily with funding from the EU and EU Member states.

ECES promotes **electoral and democratic strengthening** through the provision of advisory services, operational support and management of large projects mainstreaming capacity and leadership development via peer exchanges and comparative experiences, dialogue and the prevention and mitigation of electoral conflicts.

ECES has obtained the TRACE certification for its financial management transparency and the ISO 9001 certification for its Quality Management System. ECES has crafted and copyrighted its strategy called "**A European Response to Electoral Cycle Support - EURECS**", which is implemented via **specific methodologies and tools** also copyrighted by ECES. EURECS is an innovative delivery mechanism to implement **electoral and democracy assistance activities that are consistent primarily with European values and EU policies targeting the facilitation of the**

partner countries.

ECES together with the College of Europe, Interpeace, Mediateur, Foundation Hironnelle and the Institute of Research and Education on Negotiation (ESSEC) is implementing on behalf of the EU the ERMES project, the European Resource for Mediation Support. ECES is providing the key expertise and the office for the project that is a strategic tool for the EU role in mediation and dialogue.

In this context ECES is also a member of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office network, the **biggest and leading civil society European platform of 40 independent organisations and think tanks from 16 European countries committed to peacebuilding and the prevention of conflict**

We are very proud and humbled to be present with you today also as technical and financial partners of yours of this very important meeting via the gracious funding of the Italian Foreign Affairs Ministry and Cooperation

Indeed, the African Union Commission and ECES have signed a MoU just one year ago, with Commissioner Bankole, in which the two parties have expressed their commitment to work together towards supporting electoral processes across the Continent and enhancing the profile and capacities of African Electoral Management Bodies.

Since the signature of the MoU, ECES has invested huge efforts in mobilizing resources in order to keep up with the Agreement's pledges and intentions. We are happy to have been able to mobilise funds from the Italian Government, through a project known as INNOV-ELECTIONS and through which we are sponsoring this event today.

Since its launch in December 2020, the **impact of the Innov-Elections project extends to a total of 35 beneficiary countries and more than 1,088 person representatives of Electoral Management Bodies in Africa**, delivering activities in English, French, Portuguese, and Arabic. This number is comprehensive of the **901** people reached through the **ECES' Live Coaching sessions** and the **187** that are currently attending the **Master online on Electoral Policy and Administration** that we deliver in collaboration with Sant' Anna University.

Indeed, in the framework of our MoU, the AUC requested ECES to provide financial and technical support to the organization of the AAEA Executive Committee meeting.

It is with no hesitation that ECES decided to be part of this event, given its importance in terms of promoting common values of democratic governance, free, fair, inclusive, and credible elections in Africa. We all know the context within which we conduct our business, and we all see how difficult it has become to continue rolling out democratic and peaceful electoral processes.

The recent developments in some parts of the Continent make it more important to ensure the conditions of a continuous dialogue but also the exchange of views and best practices, as well as the opportunity of a platform to identify common priorities and elaborate

considered very strategic to support this event.

Especially, this is the first event of this kind since Covid. Before that, the AAEA have already started its work and engaged in concrete initiatives. The goal of the meeting of this week is to restart the process that the Covid has stopped.

I'm sure that your presence here will be instrumental in giving the AAEA a new energy and a renewed impetus, as an important milestone before the AAEA General Assembly.

On that note, I'd like to reassure all of you of the strong and unwavering commitment of ECES to continue seeking for resources in order to be able to support the holding of the next GA before the end of the year. It will be our honour and privilege to be part of this very important dynamization of the Association. Taking place in a context of several key electoral episodes, the mobilization of the AAEA will definitely be a strategic move towards the consolidation of democratic elections in Africa.

Today's meeting is the first step of many, and we are honoured to count as your partners.

I'd like to thank the Italian Government who is sincerely committed in supporting a stronger democratic governance in Africa and who is funding ECES for this activity.

I wish you a very constructive meeting and fruitful deliberations.

Thank you for your attention