

African Tax Administration Forum elects new Council

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The African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF) elected a new governing Council to lead the organisation for the next two years at its recently ended fourth General Assembly held in Durban, South Africa. Nigeria, represented by Mr Babatunde Fowler the Chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Services (FIRS) of Nigeria was elected chair of the Council. Other members of the Council elected were Mauritius as vice chair, Uganda, Burundi, Swaziland, Ghana, Liberia, Tanzania. South Africa holds a permanent seat on the ATAF Council.

In his acceptance speech, Mr Fowler pledged to bring on board North African countries to join and accede to ATAF and let them see the benefit of being a member of the premier Pan-African tax organisation.

“It is my fervent hope that by the end of my tenure I would have managed to rope in North African countries and encourage greater participation and representation from francophone countries,” said Mr Fowler amid applause and ululations.

Mr Fowler also thanked the previous ATAF Council and its chair for a great work done in the previous two years in taking the voice of African tax matters to the global stage. He guaranteed members that he would continue the institutional development that the previous council had implemented and advanced.

Speaking ahead of the elections Mr Fowler said he would like to recommend the implementation of exchange programmes between various tax administrations within the continent.

“Heads of tax administrations must visit each other more often and carry out study tours of what other tax administrations are doing in Africa to address challenges concerning the cash economy and other low compliance concerns on the continent,” said Mr Fowler.

Tenure of ATAF Executive Secretary Extended

Another major highlight of the fourth ATAF General Assembly was that the renewal of the tenure of the incumbent ATAF Executive Secretary Mr Logan Wort of South Africa by another four years. Mr Wort’s tenure of service as head of the ATAF Secretariat is scheduled to expire in March 2017 but the General Assembly endorsed the Council recommendation to extend Mr Wort’s contract until March 2021.

“I am humbled by the way that both the ATAF Council and General Assembly have shown confidence in me as Executive Secretary over the last couple of years. It is my desire to ensure that ATAF promotes efficient and effective tax administration to improve the living standards of the people of Africa,” said Mr Wort.

“The changes to the global tax landscape, development of new standards and the need for development in Africa make the work of ATAF important as the voice of Africa in tax matters,” he added.

Mr Wort also pledged to work closely with the newly-elected ATAF Council, which is the highest decision-making body outside the General Assembly, in order to embark on a massive membership commitment

drive to ensure that ATAF strives to provide a platform to improve the performance of tax administration in Africa.

“Better tax administration will enhance economic growth, increase accountability of the State to its citizens, and more effectively mobilise domestic resources,” said Mr Wort.

The fourth ATAF General Assembly held under the theme “Harnessing the African Cash Economy: Contributing Towards Expansion of the African Tax Base,” saw at least 25 member countries deliberating on various operational and governance issues such as understanding the cash economy, tax evasion, base erosion and profit shifting as well as Council elections and the tenure of the Executive Secretary.

At the General Assembly, ATAF pledged to focus on broadening the African tax base through among other measures, focusing on illicit financial flows and Africa’s cross border taxation especially the impact of multi-national enterprises. ATAF will focus on extractive industries, trade mispricing and VAT as important elements of improving the African revenue base.

Work on the OECD BEPS project will continue as well as participation in the OECD Inclusive Framework. Ongoing focus on other programmes will include means of taxing the cash economy and building ICT capabilities in African tax administrations.

ATAF is an international organisation for revenue authorities in Africa. The organisation was launched in Kampala, Uganda in November 2009 and provides a platform for African revenue authorities to articulate African tax priorities, develop and shape best practices and build capacity in tax policy and administration. Its membership comprises 38 tax administrations across the African continent.

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