



For Further Information Contact:

Mikias Sissay, +2206759756, msissay@gmail.com

George Christiansen, +220 3711777, goryombul@gmail.com

For Immediate Release 10 April 2013: To All Media

Meeting with reporters and media editors in Banjul, The Gambia today, representatives of the Department of Political Affairs of the African Union and the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies shared their plans to engage citizens across Africa in public dialogue about human rights and the protection of personal freedoms at all levels of African societies.

Dr. Hannah Forster, executive director of the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies, Dr. Salah Hamnad Siddiq, human rights expert, Department of Political Affairs of the African Union, and Dr. Alieu Badara Saja Taal, senior lecturer, Department of Political Science of the University of The Gambia, met with media representatives to discuss values critical to Africa's integration and unity such as freedom of expression and freedom of association.

This African Shared Values dialogue was held as a side event to the 53rd Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, at the Kairaba Beach Hotel in Banjul.

"We at the African Union are committed to bringing the concept of African Shared Values to the people of Africa, in ways that they can understand and accept," said Dr. Salah Hammad Siddiq, human rights expert for the African Union Commission. "Shared Values are the basic beliefs, ideals and principles that we as Africans agree can best unite our countries and our continent," Hammad explained.

"For more than six months now, we have been travelling the continent talking with people about Shared Values to better understand what they think are the essential values we need to follow in order to create a united, peaceful and prosperous Africa.," Hammad added. "We at the African Union aim to get Africans at all levels excited and committed to Shared Values – values such as freedom of expression, freedom of speech, solidarity between nations, respect for differences, and supporting each other in times of need, despite national borders."

The Department of Political Affairs of the African Union is sponsoring a series of Shared Values Conversations in major cities of Africa through September of this year. Future Conversations are currently planned in Addis Ababa, Nairobi and Johannesburg.



According to Hammad, reporters and broadcasters are critical partners in helping the African Union communicate the importance of Shared Values, especially to Africa's future generation. "Those of you working as reporters, editors or producers today can play a critical role with us in reaching the African leaders of tomorrow – and to encourage their commitment to values-based decision-making," Hammad said. "Together with us, we can realize a future in which a universal set of values underlie the governance of most African countries."

Hammad also called upon members of the media to sponsor their own dialogues with the public – such as through radio call-in programmes or through social media forums – in order to hear from people of diverse outlooks. He challenged reporters to use their positions to introduce African Shared Values into everyday thinking and everyday living, in The Gambia and elsewhere.

Forster called upon the media to work with organizations like the African Union and the ACDHRS to learn more about human rights and the protections provided under many countries' laws, and to work with NGOs in educating the African public about democracy and human rights.

Dr. Taal noted that the future of Africa's unity depends on its citizens. Media have a big role in educating the public about the importance of African Unity.

###

The Department of Political Affairs of the African Union sponsors an African Shared Values website: www.africansharedvalues.org. Those interested can visit this website to engage in online discourse about Shared Values. You will also find a list of the African Shared Values on this website.

African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies website is: www.acdhrs.org

African Shared Values can also be debated via social media, as explained below.

Online Media Dialogue

Any reporter, presenter, editor or producer can participate in the media dialogue online. Simply post your questions or comments on our Banjul forum by April 11, 2013 at: [www.http://www.africansharedvalues.org/en/forum](http://www.africansharedvalues.org/en/forum).

Questions and comments will be answered online.



To learn more about African Shared Values, visit:

www.africansharedvalues.org

 www.facebook.com/Africansharedvalues

 www.twitter.com/AUsharedvalues