



ICRC



AU and ICRC: 20 years of cooperation in humanitarian diplomacy and promotion of International Humanitarian Law

On 4th of May 1992, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Organization of the African Unity (OAU), predecessor of the African Union (AU). The year marked the beginning of the collaboration between the two organizations through the sharing of experiences and views on humanitarian consequences arising from armed conflict situations on the African continent.

The two organisations have also continued to collaborate in the promotion of a better knowledge of and respect by AU Members States for, international humanitarian law (IHL) also known as the Geneva Conventions, provision of legal support to the AU Commission for the development and mainstreaming of international humanitarian law in its policies and decisions. Ever since, the ICRC is accredited to and enjoys an observer status at the AU.

Over the past 20 years, in its efforts to enhance its partnership with the African Union, the ICRC delegation to the AU has jointly engaged in various activities with the AU Departments of Peace and Security, Political Affairs and Social Affairs, the Directorate of Information and Communication, Office of the Legal Council and the AU Commission on International Law.

On various occasions, significant exchanges and briefings have taken place with representatives of the AU Commission and Ambassadors of AU Member States on humanitarian concerns on the continent while issues related to protection and assistance for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as part of the civilian population affected by armed conflicts have also been brought into attention.

Against this background, the ICRC has further built up its partnership with the AU Commission, and in particular the AU Peace and Security Department, through the secondment, since 2009, of an IHL expert to support the different Divisions and services of the Commission. The integration of IHL into the doctrine, procedures and training of the African Standby Forces as well as into AU current Peace Support Operations and the dissemination and training of IHL and humanitarian principles amongst its staff are also part of the activities that the ICRC delegation to the AU has been engaging with the AU Commission.

Since the establishment of the AU in 2002, the ICRC has endeavoured to organise annual high-level visits by the ICRC President, for a dialogue with the AU and its organs, in particular with the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) on the humanitarian challenges related to armed conflicts and other situations of violence in Africa. This year, to mark the 20 years of partnership, a visit by the ICRC President to the AU is planned in which the ICRC President will reaffirm ICRC institutional

commitment to the partnership and cooperation with AU, in the promotion of IHL among the AU member states, legal and technical support for AU peace and security architecture and enhancing protection of civilian populations affected by armed conflicts and other situations of violence in the continent..