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AFRICAN EXPERTS MEETING TO CRAFT A ROADMAP FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS STRATEGY FOR AFRICA

Banjul, The Gambia, 20 October 2011- As part of efforts to strengthen the African human rights system, to deepen the culture of democracy and to ensure the promotion of human rights on the continent, the African Union today embarked on a three day consultation workshop in Banjul, focusing on how to implement and monitor the Human Rights Strategy for Africa (HRSA). The meeting, which is being attended by representatives from AU organs with a human rights mandate, regional courts and tribunals, national human rights institutions (NHRI), partners and civil society, is expected to develop a roadmap for the implementation of the action plan of the HRSA.

The Human Rights Strategy was adopted by the organs of the African Union, courts and tribunals in April this year in Banjul. The strategy, through its 5 year action plan, seeks to address challenges of the African human rights system. Based on those challenges, the strategy has the following objectives:

Enhance policy, programmes and institutional coordination of the multiplicity of human rights initiatives on the continent. (Among the other existing initiatives are the 1963 Charter of the Organisation of African Unity, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights; the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the African Charter on Democracy Elections and Governance and other global human rights initiatives established by the United Nations. The Human Rights Strategy for Africa seeks to adopt a comprehensive and coordinated approach to all these collective human rights mandates).

Strengthen the capacity of human rights institutions at national, regional and continental levels; Accelerate ratification, domestication and effective implementation of human rights instruments; Increase promotion and popularisation of African human rights norms

African Union member states, the African Union Commission, AU organs, institutions, and Regional Economic Communities are charged with implementing the 5 year action plan of the Human Rights Strategy for Africa, with active support from the national human rights institutions and civil society.

The workshop's opening ceremony was addressed by the Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights Mrs Rene Alapin Gansou and was chaired by Justice Ramadhan of the African Court on Human and People's Rights. Dr Mamadou Dia, Head of the Division of Democracy, Governance, Human Rights and Elections at the AU Commission delivered the opening remarks. He recalled that the HRSA and its action plan had received wide input and consultation from key stakeholders over a five year period, starting with a meeting in Bahar Dar Ethiopia in 2006, Arusha Tanzania in 2009 and Banjul in 2010 and 2011. In addition to coming up with a roadmap on the implementation of the human rights strategy, he said the forum will also allow AU organs, regional courts and tribunals, national human rights commissions and civil society organisations to be part of the activities related to the Year of Shared Values (2012).

The policy consultation on implementing and monitoring the human rights strategy for Africa is being held on the margins of the 50th Ordinary session of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights as well as the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. The workshop is running concurrently with another initiative of the African Union on human rights i.e. a forum of non-governmental organizations, which aims to enable them to participate effectively in the upcoming 50th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and People's rights, which will begin in Banjul on 24 October. Both workshops will feed in to the Ordinary Session of the ACHPR.

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