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Directorate of Information and Communication

Press Release N°

The Fifth Annual African Union Dialogue on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance in Africa



Arusha, Tanzania, 23 November 2016: The High Level Dialogue (HLD) was part of the celebrations of 2016 as the Year of Human Rights in Africa with Particular Focus on the Rights of Women. The event was held in Arusha, Tanzania, jointly by the AU Organs with a human rights mandate. The Vice President of the United Republic of Tanzania was the guest of honour during the Opening Ceremony.

The opening ceremony of the Fifth Annual African Union (AU) High Level Dialogue (HLD) on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance in Africa: Trends, challenges and prospects held in Arusha, Tanzania from 23-26 November, 2016 was graced by the Vice President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Hon. Samia Suluhu Hassan on behalf of the president of the United republic of Tanzania, H.E Dr. John Pombe Joseph Magufuli. It celebrated under the theme “Reflecting, celebrating and advancing Human and People’s Rights in Africa with a special focus on the Rights of Women” following the AU’s declaration of the year 2016 as the African year of Human Rights with particular focus on the Rights of Women.

The Vice President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Hon. Samia Suhulu Hassan, in her opening remarks, extended words of welcome to the distinguished participants and underlined that, the dialogue comes at an opportune moment when many countries in Africa are at the stage of transforming their economies to middle income economies emphasizing on the importance of incorporating human rights in business. Hon. Samia Suhulu commended the African Union for the achievements that have been attained over the years, particularly in the area of human rights but underscored that “we should not be blinded by these successes and headways, rather we should be able to assess whether they have made significant impact to the majority of our people in the continent.”



Hon. Samia further highlighted that despite the existing intricate correlation between human rights and women rights, Africa still continues to experience, among other things the practice of female genital mutilation and early marriages, few education opportunities,

low wages, human trafficking, domestic abuse and gender based violence. She therefore urged all African human rights institutions to continue their efforts in addressing challenges related to the promotion and protection of these rights in order to maintain their relevance.



The President of the African Court on Human and People’s Rights, Hon. Justice Sylvain Oré, underscored that the Dialogue would provide an opportunity to consolidate the gains already made over the years and ensure better coordination of human rights bodies on the continent, based on the ideals encapsulated in AU’s Agenda 2063. “It is hoped that the celebrations will initiate an advocacy and coordinating campaigns that will effectively reach out to African stakeholders and partners at all levels,” he added. Hon. Justice Sylvain emphasized the need for human rights institutions on the continent to work in more active synergy with Regional Economic Community organs adding that the adoption by ECOWAS, the EAC and SADC of similar norms on human rights, democracy and good governance requires us to work more towards the harmonization rather than the duplication of norms.

Representing the Commissioner for Political Affairs Department of the African Union Commission (AUC), H.E Dr. Aisha L. Abdullahi in his statement was the Director of AUC Department of Political Affairs, Dr. Khabele Matlosa who stated that “As we gather here today to reflect critically on the state of human rights in Africa with particular focus on the rights of women, we should not forget that history is the best teacher for all of us.”

In addition, Dr. Matlosa recalled that since the transformation from OAU to the AU, the continent has moved from norms setting to institutional building in the field of human and peoples' rights in general, and the rights of women in particular, with the adoption of several human rights instruments. "The Africa we want will depend largely on the importance given to the promotion, protection and observance of human and peoples' rights on the continent." He reiterated.

The Dialogue which was full to capacity and attended by distinguished permanent representatives to the African Union, representatives of the UN, the AU and the African Court, regional organizations, civil society and academics among others, ended with group and plenary discussions centered around topics such as the State of Human Rights in Africa, the Normative Framework of Human Rights in Africa: Development, Trends and challenges, the rights of Women in Africa as well as the role of Civil Society organizations in the promotion and protection of Human Rights in Africa.

Note to the Editor:

- The first Dialogue was held in November, 2012 in Dakar, Senegal on the state of democratic governance in Africa.
- The second Dialogue was held in November, 2013 in Dakar, Senegal and focused on enhancing constitutionalism and rule of law in Africa.
- The third Dialogue was held in October 2014 in Dakar, Senegal focusing on silencing the guns: strengthening governance in resolving conflicts in Africa.
- The Fourth Dialogue was held in October 2015 in Kigali, Rwanda on the theme "Women's Equal Participation and Leadership in Political Parties in Africa".

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