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PRESS RELEASE

THE CONCLUSION OF THE 12TH AU-EU HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE



The 12th AU-EU Human Rights Dialogue

Brussels, Belgium, 10 January 2017: The 12th AU-EU Human Rights Dialogue was concluded today in Brussels, Belgium. The Dialogue was led by the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Dr Aisha L. Abdullahi and the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Mr Stavros Lambrinidis.

The AU participants included Hon. Justice Sylvain Ore President of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, Hon. Prof. Benyam Dawit Mezmur, Chairperson of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Hon. Maya

Sahil-Fadel, Commissioner of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Mr. Omar Faruk Osman, Chairperson for Political Affairs Cluster of ECOSOCC, as well as other AU staff working on human rights-related issues. On the EU side the participants included Mr. Koen Vervaeke Managing Director for Africa, Ms. Lotte Knudsen, Managing Director for Human Rights, Amb. Mara Marinaki EEAS Principal Advisor on Gender Issues, Mrs. Kristin de Peyron, Head of Division, Pan-African Affairs, as well as EU staff working on human rights-related issues.

The AU-EU Human Rights Dialogue is held annually in pursuance of the decision of the 6th EU-Africa Ministerial Troika Meeting in Vienna that was confirmed at the subsequent 7th meeting in Brazzaville. The Dialogue avail the platform for regular sharing of experience on issues related to Human Rights, Democratic Principles and the Rule of Law in Africa and in Europe, with a view to overcoming the challenges and consolidating the achievements, as well as enhancing coordination on Human Rights issues in multilateral fora, such as the Human Rights Council.

Both parties discussed recent developments in Africa and Europe in the area of human rights, notably the work of the AU organs with a human rights mandate and the implementation of Project 2016 to celebrate 2016 as the year of human rights in Africa with particular focus on the rights of women.



The AU and EU welcomed the Declaration of the Human and Peoples' Decade in Africa and the launch of the drafting of the African Human Rights **Action Plan** 2017-26. The two parties agreed that it is a unique opportunity for concrete and tangible

improvements in the protection and promotion of the fundamental rights. The EU agreed to support the AU with its plan to ensure the ratification and implementation of international and continental human rights instruments at the national level.

The AU acknowledged with appreciation the EU 10 million euros support to the African Human Rights system under the EU **Panafrican Programme**. Both sides also welcomed the **High-Level Dialogue** on Democratic Governance focusing on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Africa, which was held in November 2016 in Arusha, Tanzania.

H.E. Dr. Aisha L. Abdullahi, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs addressed the dialogue and stated that “the AU-EU Partnership on Democratic Governance and Human Rights has been getting stronger over the years as can be seen from the numerous AU and EU resolutions as well as policy decisions adopted within the broader framework of this partnership”.

The Commissioner further added that we also celebrated 2016 as the year of human rights in Africa with particular focus on the rights of women. I wish to also take this opportunity to applaud the Decision by the AU Heads of State and Government declaring the next 10 years as the Human and Peoples’ Decade in Africa. This declaration provides a golden opportunity for the entire continent to take stock of the human rights situation in Africa and collectively work together to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights.

H.E. Dr. Abdullahi also indicated that the declaration seeks to, among other things: enhance public awareness about human rights; expedite the ratification and implementation of the human rights instruments, encourage Member States to develop policies, plans of actions and programmes on the promotion and protection of human and peoples’ rights, and encourage Member States to recommit to the promotion and protection of human rights.

The Commissioner for Political Affairs concluded her statement by stating that the vision of a peaceful, united and prosperous Africa set out in Agenda 2063 can only be achieved through sound planning and results-oriented policies and actions. Agenda 2063 has been adopted by our Heads of State and Government as the Continent’s new long-term development blueprint for the next 50 years. Of the seven aspirations of Agenda 2063, the 3rd aspiration envisions “an Africa of Good Governance, Democracy, Respect for Human Rights, Justice and the Rule of Law”. Our valued partnership with the EU is vital for Africa to realize this noble goal of Agenda 2063.

The AU and the EU commended the work of Civil Society Steering Committees in organizing the 6th AU-EU Civil Society Seminar on Democratic Governance and Human Rights on 9 January 2017 in Brussels. The seminar focussed on counter-*terrorism* and human rights. The parties welcomed and took note of the recommendations, including an initiative on human rights and counter-*terrorism* in Africa.

They also welcomed the adoption of the Mandate and Terms of Reference of the Steering Committee of the AU-EU Civil Society Seminar on Human Rights and Democratic Governance.

The AU and the EU also jointly reaffirmed the need for greater space for civil society within this partnership in order to fulfill their obligations without undue interference and called on the civil society to inclusively and meaningfully contribute to the implementation of activities and programmes of the AU-EU Partnership on Democratic Governance and Human Rights, including on the preparation of the Africa-EU Summit.

Both parties agreed to hold the next round of the Human Rights Dialogue in Africa in 2017/18.

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