



AFRICAN UNION AND UNITED NATIONS TECHNICAL CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS IN AFRICA:



29 October, 2017: Banjul, The Gambia: The African Union and United Nations Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) concluded a two-day consultative meeting on Human Rights in Conflict Situations in Africa. The participants were drawn from the AUC Departments for Political Affairs; Social Affairs and the Department of Peace and Security. Also in attendance were the representatives of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights; African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC); and AU Human Rights Observers. Participants from the United Nations agencies included representatives of the UNOHCHR (Geneva, New York, Addis, MINUSMA, MINUSCA, UNSOM, UNAMID and the UN Department of Peace Keeping Operations and the UN Office to the African Union

The overall aim of the two-day consultative meeting was to draw on some of the challenges, opportunities, and recommendations outlined during the first consultation in October 2014, to among other things, develop a comprehensive framework of cooperation between OHCHR and the AU on human rights in peace operations. Additionally, it was also meant to assess progress to date and lessons learned, identify

good practices, and determine joint initiatives and areas for future collaboration based on complementarity and comparative advantage.

The African Union, has over the years committed to advancing human and peoples' rights in Africa. Specifically, concrete steps had been taken to integrate human rights in peace support operations. As a result, several mechanisms have been established to document conflict-related human rights violations. The AU has also established fact-finding missions and commissions of inquiry to investigate human rights violations in conflict situations. In addition, the AU has increasingly included civilian components in its peace operations, notably, the deployment of human rights observers. This was first demonstrated in Mali, and more recently in the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Somalia, and currently in Burundi and DRC.

The AU and UN have collaborated in the deployment and training of human rights observers, undertaking joint human rights fact finding missions, and organized human rights experience sharing forums. It was in the context of the foregoing that the AU and OHCHR held their second consultative meeting to share views, experiences, and identify challenges and areas for future cooperation and collaboration.

The Consultation was opened by a number of statements from the UNOAU, OHCHR, the ACHPR and DPA/AUC. On behalf of the UN Office to the AU, Mr. Nurudeen Azez welcomed all participants to the meeting and called for a comprehensive Peace and Security Planning Mission in African Union; according to him, this approach will guarantee human rights inclusion in all the Peace and Security Operations in Africa. On his part, Mr. Mahamane Cisse-Gouro, Chief of Africa Branch of the OHCHR, began his statement by applauding the African Union for her continued partnership with the OHCHR on promotion and protection of human rights in Africa. He called for a genuine evaluation of the outcomes of the first consultative meeting for a better planning for human rights programmes in Peace Operations in the future. He also expressed optimism that the Consultation would help reinforce the existing relationship between the AU and the OHCHR on human rights.

On her part, Advocate Pansy Tlakula, the Chairperson of the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights underscored the need to prioritized implementation of human and Peoples' rights decisions by the African Union Member States.

H.E Minata Samata Cessouma, the Commissioner for Political Affairs, on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union welcome all the participants to the meeting. She indicated that there cannot be a sustainable peace and development in Africa without respect for human and peoples' rights. She thereafter, emphasized the need for deeper collaboration within and between the African Union and the United Nations on human rights, peace and security in the continent. She also called for greater coordination and collaboration between the AU and the UN on promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights in Africa.

The Commissioner for Political Affairs, officially opened the Consultation by calling on all participants to focus on identifying modalities for enhancing cooperation and collaboration

to better promote and protect human rights in AU and UN Peace operations in Africa. She also called for more support to the human rights observation missions currently deployed in Burundi and DRC. Mrs. Minata Samata Cessouma concluded by calling on the UN to support the implementation of the African Union 10-Year Action Plan of the Human and Peoples' Rights Decade (HPRD) in Africa; "this Consultation comes as we finalize the development of the 10-year Action Plan of the Human and Peoples' Decade, which provides a golden opportunity for the AU Member States to take stock of the human rights situation in Africa and collectively work together to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights"

The meeting was officially closed by remarks from H.E Minata Samata Cessouma and representatives of the UN. They all expressed their unreserved gratitude to all the participants for their participation in charting a way forward for stronger cooperation and collaboration to the promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights in AU and UN peace operations in Africa.

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