



17TH AU-EU HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE

09 NOVEMBER 2021

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

VIRTUAL

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

1. The 17th African Union (AU) - European Union (EU) Human Rights Dialogue was held on 09 November 2021 in a virtual format. The Dialogue was co-chaired by H.E. Amb. Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security and H.E. Mr. Eamon Gilmore, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights.
2. The meeting took place at a crucial time, following the Second AU-EU Ministerial meeting, which was held in Kigali on 26 October 2021 as part of preparation towards the Sixth EU-AU Summit. At the former, the AU and EU Ministers revitalised their common agenda and renewed their joint commitment to upholding human rights, enhancing democracy, and strengthening the rule of law and good governance, in line with international human rights law and respective regional legal and policy framework on human rights and democracy.
3. The AU and the EU recognized this High Level Human Rights Dialogue as a clear manifestation of a strategic partnership of equals, rooted in shared values and common interests and guided by a long-term vision. The Dialogue proved once again to be a unique platform to update one another on the situation of human rights in respective continents and with a focus on specific country situations, share experiences, exchange points of view and strengthen cooperation on specific human rights issues.
4. Both sides acknowledged challenges faced as a result of COVID-19 and continue to call for a rights-based response to the pandemic, and emphasised that any measure introduced to mitigate the consequences of the COVID-19 must be lawful, necessary and proportionate. The increase in cases of sexual and gender-based violence, including domestic violence, restrictions on the exercise of fundamental freedoms, in particular freedom of expression and assembly, attacks on independent media and journalists are of particular concern. The EU and AU agreed to exchange information and good practices in the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of the pandemic.
5. The EU congratulated the AU and its Member States on the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the foundation for

the African Human and Peoples' Rights System. In this spirit, both sides recalled the importance of making concrete progress towards the ratification, domestication and implementation of agreed continental and international human rights norms and standards.

6. The EU noted the finalisation and adoption of the AU Strategic Plan for the promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights in Africa (2021-2030) and stands ready to consider possible joint actions contributing to its implementation in Africa.
7. Both sides recognised that the right to development is rooted in the universality, indivisibility, interrelation, and interdependence of all human rights. The AU and the EU agreed to strengthen their cooperation in international fora on the right to development.
8. On the Abolition of the death penalty, the EU commended efforts made by some African Member States to abolish the death penalty. The EU also praised the efforts made by the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to encourage the adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the abolition of the death penalty in Africa. Both sides called upon countries still using the death penalty to take steps towards the abolition of the death penalty.
9. On women's rights and gender mainstreaming, both sides agreed to work closely with their respective Member States to prevent and eliminate sexual and gender-based violence, including domestic violence. Both Parties acknowledged that the AU strategy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, the EU Gender Action Plan III, and the African Pillar of the Spotlight Initiative guide actions at country level. Both sides recalled the importance of ratifying, domesticating and implementing the Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights in Africa.
10. On Transitional Justice, both sides underlined the need to promote transitional justice process in countries in conflict or countries emerging from conflict. The EU noted the efforts of the AU to support some Member States with the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms at the national level. Both sides agreed on the importance of continuing efforts to strengthen the rule of law and ensure accountability, working on a complementarity basis at national, regional and international levels. The AU welcomed the EU's upcoming support to implement its transitional justice policy and agreed to hold a 2022 edition of the expert-level seminar on transitional justice. The EU reiterated its readiness to facilitate dialogue between African State Parties to the Rome Statute and the International Criminal Court.
11. On Business and Human Rights, the AU recognized the support provided by the EU to finalize its Business and Human Rights Policy, while the EU reiterated its readiness to continue consultations and provide technical assistance as appropriate. Both parties agreed to promote due diligence guidance for responsible supply chain management in order to prevent or mitigate adverse impacts associated with business activities.

12. On electoral observation, both sides recognized the excellent AU-EU cooperation despite the challenges linked to COVID-19 pandemic in conducting elections and in carrying out elections observation. The EU welcomed the AU Guidelines for Elections during COVID-19 and other Public Health Emergencies and pledged to support its implementation at the national level. Both sides agreed on the need to continue cooperating in this area and uphold the integrity of electoral processes. They committed to a close collaboration on the follow-up to election observation recommendations in countries where AU and/or EU election observations were present and agreed to jointly prepare for the new phase of the African Union Capacity in Election Observation project.
13. The AU and the EU commended the key role of civil society in the AU-EU Human Rights Dialogue. Both sides, while regretting that the past two sessions of the AU-EU Civil Society Seminar did not take place due to COVID-19 restrictions, welcomed the recommendations put forward by Civil Society representatives of AU-EU Steering Committee and committed to explore concrete ways for further engagement. The AU and the EU commended the work of civil society and human rights defenders on both continents, and stressed the critical importance of preserving a free and open space for their programmes and activities.
14. The AU and the EU agreed on the importance of having regular exchanges, at both political and technical levels, to facilitate the implementation of the commitments made during the Dialogue and provide input to AU-EU high level meetings.

Done in 09 November 2021