



**STATEMENT BY
H.E. DR. AISHA L. ABDULLAHI
COMMISSIONER FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**DELIVERED ON HER BEHALF BY
DR. MAMADOU DIA
AG. DIRECTOR DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS**

AT

**THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 53RD ORDINARY SESSION
OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS
(ACHPR)**

**BANJUL, THE GAMBIA
9 APRIL 2013**

Honourable Justice Lamin Jorbateh, Attorney General and Minister of Justice of the Republic of The Gambia

Honourable Madam Catherine Dupe Atoki, Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

Honourable Justice Sophia Akuffo, President of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights

Honourable Commissioners of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

Honourable Representative of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

Honourable Ministers and Heads of Delegation, Delegates of State Parties to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights

Excellencies Ambassadors and Members of the Diplomatic Corp

Distinguished Representatives of the African National Human Rights Institutions

Distinguished Representatives of UN Agencies

Distinguished Representatives of Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations

Dr. Mary Maboreke, Secretary to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply honoured and delighted to be back in the Republic of The Gambia, the smiling coast of Africa, at a historic time when we are to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Organization of the African Unity (OAU) by celebrating our Pan Africanism and African Renaissance. It is indeed a privilege to be among distinguished delegates and participants on such a momentous occasion during this 53rd Ordinary Session of the African Commission.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to express on behalf of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, our heartfelt appreciation to the Government and People of the Republic of the Gambia for the warm hospitality and welcome since we arrived in Banjul and for hosting this important ordinary session of the African Commission.

Madam Chairperson Mrs. Dupe Atoki and Members of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, I would like to congratulate you, for your unrelenting efforts and dedication to the promotion and protection of human peoples' rights on the continent. We appreciate your diligence and efforts to hold this 53rd Ordinary Session, here in the Republic of The Gambia which in no small measure enhances the effectiveness of the African Human and Peoples' Rights System in general and the work of the Commission in particular, as the key custodian of the Continental Human and Peoples' Rights Agenda. I would also particularly like to recognize and thank members of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Secretariat for their hard work behind the scenes and even more importantly to all delegates and participants for their attendance of this session.

Excellencies, Honorable Commissioners and Distinguished Delegates

You will recall that the African Heads of State and Government during the AU Summit of January 2011 dedicated 2012 as the Year of Shared Values in Africa. This was their ingenious way of bringing to light the importance of the African Shared Values in consolidating Africa's integration. In the same vein, the 16th AU Summit adopted the African Governance Architecture and its Platform to support AU Member States in their efforts to promote democracy, good governance, human rights and the rule of law. Within this context, the launch of the African Governance Platform in June of 2012 in Lusaka, Zambia marked not only a new beginning in our working methods, but also a future which inspires a lot of hope in deepening democratic governance in our systems of government in Africa.

The Department of Political Affairs is humbled but proud of the progress that has been made thus far in consolidating democracy and good governance on the continent. The launch of the African Governance Platform, is a unique opportunity to strengthen capacity and deepen our understanding of issues of human and peoples' rights, democracy and governance, which constitute our African Shared Values.

Excellencies, Honorable Commissioners and Distinguished Delegates

As we move ahead with the agenda of the continental integration based on African Shared Values, it is important to reflect on best practices and lessons learnt so far, and one of those lessons is that the respect for human rights is an important element towards the attainment of peace and sustainable development. Equally important is the fact that achieving peace and security is premised on a culture of respect for human rights, but above all, the promotion and protection of human rights is a collective responsibility.

In the same vein, the African Union Commission is monitoring the human rights situations in Mali, Central African Republic, Guinea Bissau and other parts of the Continent. In fact and for the first time in the history of the AU, a human rights observers' mission has been deployed to Mali as part of AFISMA, the African Union Peacekeeping Mission in Mali.

While the African Union is taking the lead, the success so far cannot be achieved without the contribution of all stakeholders involved in the promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights, an important component of which is the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). I therefore wish to thank members of CSOs who diligently participate in the sessions of the Commission and lead the noble fight for humanity at all levels.

Excellencies, Honorable Commissioners and Distinguished Delegates

The Department of Political Affairs continues the effort of implementing the Human Rights Strategy for Africa, which was adopted in April 2011, here in Banjul, The

Gambia. The Strategy is meant to address current weaknesses in the human rights system in Africa, as well as to bring about convergence in the workings of the human rights institutions and actors on the continent thereby helping to strengthen and facilitate the development and coordination of human rights promotion and protection. Implementing the Action Plan of the Strategy will pave the way for an enhanced coordination among the various stakeholders, in particular the AU and its organs, Regional Economic Communities' (RECs) Courts and Tribunals in addition to the National Human Rights Institutions and the wider African CSOs.

It is also pertinent to note that, the Strategy also focuses on issues related to Transitional Justice, which has become a major area of focus our quest to deal with issues of post conflict reconstruction and development. The Department of Political Affairs is collaborating with AU Organs, partners and other stakeholders to finalize the development of an AU Transitional Justice Policy Framework for Africa.

Excellencies, Honorable Commissioners and Distinguished Delegates

I will conclude by reiterating the African Union Commission's support to the work of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and in the wisdom and foresight of its Chairperson and Members.

Once again, I would like on behalf of the African Union Commission to express our appreciation to the Government and peoples of the Republic of The Gambia and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights for organizing this very important meeting, and invite you to contribute your ideas and suggestions on how we can move forward together and make this Session a success.

I thank you.