



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF
H.E. DR. AISHA L. ABDULLAHI
COMMISSIONER FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE NGOS FORUM
ON THE MARGIN OF THE 55TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ACHPR

LUANDA, ANGOLA
24-26 APRIL 2014

Your Excellency, Representative of the Government of the Republic of Angola
Distinguished Representatives of the AU Organs
Distinguished Representatives of the Civil Society and Non-Governmental
Organizations
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of H.E. Dr. Aisha L. Abdullahi, Commissioner for Political Affairs, it's an honour and privilege for me to be here with you today in this closing ceremony of the African NGOs Forum on the margin of the 55th Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, which is to take place here in this beautiful city of Luanda.

At the outset, I would like to express our profound appreciation to the People and the Government of the Republic of Angola for hosting us in this momentous African city. I also wish to express my deepest appreciation to the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS) and the NGOs Steering Committee for their enormous efforts to organize this meeting regularly on the margin of each Session of the ACHPR. I wish seize this opportunity to extend to you all warm greetings and to congratulate you on a very successful Forum, hoping that the recommendations made will contribute to the promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights on our beloved continent.

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants
Ladies and Gentlemen

The African Human Rights System with its various instruments paved the way for the advancement of human rights promotion and protection in Africa. It also led to the creation of strategic measures to accelerate the attainment of respect for human rights on the continent. Such instruments have an undeniable moral force and provide practical guidance to States in their conduct. The value of the African Union Human Rights Instruments and Mechanisms rests on their recognition and acceptance by Member States and indeed they may be seen as declaratory of broadly accepted goals and principles within the African Community.

The Political Affairs Department of the African Union Commission is mandated to contribute to the emergence of a political environment within and among African countries and has the objective of ensuring the respect of human dignity on the continent by working closely with the AU Organs with a human rights mandate.

It's against this background that the Political Affairs Department has led the African Union Commission's efforts to establish the African Governance Architecture (AGA), which was adopted at the AU Summit of January 2011. The AGA is meant to strengthen coordination amongst AU organs and institutions with a formal mandate in governance, democracy and human rights as a measure of enhancing their capacity and optimise their impact. In light of the challenges facing the Continent in the area of Governance, Democracy, Human Rights and Election, the AGA should be seen as providing an opportunity to engage and develop appropriate capacity and responses to Africa's governance challenges. A coordinated and integrated approach is no substitution for the primary responsibility of States in the area of democracy, governance and human rights.

The AGA will be implemented by a Governance Platform, which is the overall political and institutional framework for the promotion of democracy, governance and human rights in Africa. The Platform is thus the framework to facilitate, coordinate and promote structural conflict prevention in Africa in order to achieve good governance, democracy and human rights as reflected in the objectives of the African Union Governance Agenda.

As part of this process, the Department of Political Affairs along with the AU Organs, RECs Courts and Tribunal, UN Agencies as well as the African CSOs developed a Human Rights Strategy for Africa, which was adopted in April of 2011. The Strategy is meant to address current weaknesses in the human rights system in Africa and also to bring about convergence in the workings of the human rights operatives on the continent. Thus help to strengthen and facilitate the development and coordination of human rights promotion and protection.

As a result of implementing the Action Plan of the Human Rights Strategy for Africa, the Department of Political Affairs began sending human rights observers' missions to Mali and CAR. This is in addition to the establishment of the Commission of Inquiry for South Sudan, which is currently on the ground, the establishment of the AU Human Rights Memorial Site at the AU HQ for victims of human rights abuses. Also beginning the process of establishing a Pan African Institute for Human Rights to enhance the research capacity of the AU Organs with a human rights mandate. Last but not least, the declaration of 2016 as the year for human rights in Africa.

In the same terrain, the Strategy also focuses on issues related to transitional justice, which has become a major preoccupation as we grapple 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 a transitional justice policy framework for Africa, which is expected to contribute to the peace building and peace making processes on the continent.

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants Ladies and Gentlemen

This NGOs' meeting took place a few days after the commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the 1994 Rwanda Genocide, which affords us an opportunity to mark our collective resolve to never again allow genocide in Africa.

Twenty years ago, the whole world stood paralysed despite the unanimous adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1948 and many other international and continental human rights instruments. The commemoration of the Rwanda genocide is, therefore, an opportunity for all of us to renew our commitment to promote and protect the basic rights of the African people in order to prevent genocide from happening again.

In the same vein, the African Union Commission is monitoring the current situation in the Central African Republic to ensure the reinstatement of the constitution in conformity with the AU Constitutive Act and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and

Governance. We are also monitoring closely the human rights situations in many other African States such as Mali, Egypt, Sudan, South Sudan, DRC, and Somalia supported by the commitment of the African Union and its Member States towards the full enjoyment of all Africans of their human and peoples' rights.

**Excellencies, Distinguished Participants
Ladies and Gentlemen**

The realization of our common vision of a united, peaceful and prosperous Africa as well as in the building of the culture of respect for human rights and good governance on our beloved continent is a foremost task. It is indeed an important step to be taken towards building a better future for Africa and Africans. And our gathering here today is an evidence of our collective dedication and commitment to this goal. Once again, I take this opportunity to seek the support of each and every one of you present here today to assist the African Union Commission in its effort to promoting the African Shared Values.

At this juncture, allow me to express the African Union Commission's appreciation for the support of the African Civil Society Organizations towards its efforts in addressing the challenges for the attainment of sustainable peace and good governance as well as the promotion and protection of human rights in Africa, and say that more efforts are still needed.

On a final note, I wish to call on all of you, African NGOs, to participate in the development of the AU Agenda 2063 as a long-term plan to integrate and develop our continent. I also wish to remind you of the declaration of our Heads of State and Government to silence the guns by 2020 and kindly request that you include it as part of your agenda. The right to development, the right to health, the right to education, the right to food security, and fighting poverty and corruption are high on our agenda and we hope that they are high priorities in your agenda as well.

Once again, I would like on behalf of H.E. the Commissioner for Political Affairs to express our appreciation to the organizers of this Forum and to thank you all for being part of this movement to promote and protect the human and peoples' right in Africa.

I, now, have the honor to declare the NGOs' Forum officially closed.

I thank you.