



**OPENING REMARKS BY  
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COMMISSIONER FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS  
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**AT THE AU-EU SEMINAR ON FOSTERING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN  
GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGH  
REGIONAL COOPERATION**

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

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA  
16 SEPTEMBER 2014**

**Your Excellency, Ambassador Gary Quince, Head of the EU Delegation to the African Union,**

**Your Excellency, Dr. Maichael Ado, Chairperson of the UN Working Group on Human Rights and Business and Distinguished Members present,**

**Your Excellencies, Ambassadors, Heads of Delegations and Members of the Diplomatic Corp,**

**Mr. Idrissa Kane, Deputy Representative of the UN OHCHR,**

**Distinguished Representatives of UN Agencies,**

**Distinguished Representatives of the National Human Rights Institutions,**

**Distinguished Representatives of International and Regional Organizations,**

**Distinguished Representatives of Civil Society Organizations,**

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:**

It is a singular honour and a great privilege for me to address this august body on behalf of H.E. Dr. Aisha Abdullahi, Commissioner for Political Affairs of the African Union Commission who is unable to be present here today at this Joint AU-EU Seminar on “Fostering the Implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights Through Regional Cooperation.”

At the outset, allow me to express my gratitude to Amb. Gary Quince, Head of the EU Delegation to the African Union and his staff here in Addis Ababa and friends from Brussels, for the support provided to the Department of Political Affairs of the African Union Commission and for their dedication and commitment which made the convening of this Seminar a reality. I also wish to seize this opportunity to thank them once again for the commitment shown to the AU Human Rights Agenda by financially and technically cooperating with the DPA to co-organize this important Seminar on the margin of the 2014 African Regional Forum on Business and Human Rights organized jointly by the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights, the UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Department of Political Affairs of the African Union Commission.

I also wish to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights for bringing this entire process to Africa and for involving the Department of Political Affairs from the onset.

### **Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

The African Union Commission was mandated in January 2011 by the AU Assembly to establish an African Governance Architecture (AGA) and Platform. The AGA seeks to strengthen coordination, coherence and cooperation among AU organs, institutions and Regional Economic Communities with a formal mandate in the areas of democracy, governance and human rights. Its objectives are to enhance these organs and institutions capacity to optimize their impact on the destiny of our continent and people.

The establishment of AGA is therefore an opportunity to engage and develop appropriate capacity and responses to Africa's governance challenges. It is the overall political and institutional framework for the promotion of democracy, governance and human rights in Africa.

The African Governance Platform is the coordinating mechanism for the AGA. As the central coordinating mechanism it seeks to monitor the compliance and implementation of AU Shared Values instruments and in particular the Africa Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. The Platform is organized around five clusters: Constitutionalism and Rule of Law; Human Rights; Governance and Democracy and finally, the Humanitarian Cluster.

The African Union has championed and facilitated the development and adoption of important instruments that pronounce on our African Shared Values. While we share as African peoples common values that underpin our common purpose to live in peace and harmony with each other, I must hasten to admit that I still reflect constantly on whether we have or are doing enough as a continent in addressing challenges affecting our people, in particular in the area of democracy, governance and human rights. As part of the changing landscape, almost all African Member States are committed to promoting and protecting human rights now generally accepted as the means of assuming leadership.

## **Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen**

This Seminar is taking place as part of the AU-EU Partnership on Democratic Governance and Human Rights, which there is no doubt that it has reached a good level of maturity. The primary objective of this meeting is to promote the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles (UNGPs) on Business and Human Rights in the two regions and foster peer learning opportunities as well as potential areas of future cooperation between the two institutions.

We also value the commitment of the EU to the full implementation of the UN Guiding Principles and we have noted the substantial progress made in this direction. We also came to learn about the issuance of the European Commission of the sector-specific guidance notes as well as the support provided to EU Member States to develop national action plans. This Seminar is therefore, an opportunity to learn from the EU Model in order to proceed with developing an African Guiding Principles that suit the African Continent.

I would also add that the signed Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Political Affairs of the African Union Commission and the UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, presents opportunities for more cooperation and collaboration between the global and continental mechanisms to integrate the UN Guiding Principles, thus ensuring greater convergence and coherent concerted action for addressing business-related human rights challenges in Africa.

## **Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen**

I will conclude by restating the African Union Commission's support to this important process and I would like on behalf of the African Union Commission to express our appreciation, once again, to the European Union and its Delegation to the African Union for taking the initiative to organize this very important gathering, and invite you to contribute your ideas and suggestions on how we can move forward together and make this Seminar a success.

I thank you.