



**Statement by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the  
Occasion of World Humanitarian Day**

**18 August 2018**

The African Union Commission joins the world in marking World Humanitarian Day on 19 August 2018. This year, we are focusing global attention on the very essence of humanitarianism by highlighting *protection of civilians*.

In some places across the continent, parties to conflict target civilians and those who come to their aid in flagrant contravention of international humanitarian and human rights law. This must stop. It is callous and immoral. It is also inhumane and un-African. Civilians are #NotATarget!

Civilians must be protected from harm by parties to the conflict. Protecting humanitarian aid and those delivering it is a moral obligation and a legal duty of parties to conflict. They must fulfill these obligations and adhere to the rules of conduct of hostilities in relation to civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Equally, we must expand our protection umbrella beyond the effects of violent conflicts. Protecting populations vulnerable to the consequences of climate variability, extreme weather phenomena and other natural disasters demand more financial and technical investment in early warning and more robust mitigation and preparedness measures by Member States.

The AUC continues to work with Member States for a more robust framework for the protection of civilians. The Union has declared 2019 the year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa'. Forced displacement is the foremost outcome of the gaps in our normative frameworks on the protection of civilians. Join us in bridging the gap between norm setting and taking forward the actual work of protecting our people.

Innocent women and children, forcibly displaced elderly, medical workers and facilities, refugees and many other affected populations and those trying to help them are #NotATarget. Indeed, through the flagship project of Agenda 2063 on Silencing the Guns by 2020, the African Union is working towards the goal of ensuring that everyone is #NotATarget. Only when everyone is #NotATarget can we hope to fully realize the AU vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa.

On the occasion of the World Humanitarian Day, I join the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, in pursuit of strengthening the 'path to protection' for all. I urge parties to conflict to respect their obligations under international Humanitarian Law and Human rights law; to protect humanitarian and medical workers and prevent forced displacement. I call on everyone to join us in advocating for more robust protection of civilians, in the pursuit of durable solutions for the internally displaced persons and refugees and in calling out those in contempt of basic norms governing the conduct of armed conflict. The African Union Commission will continue to stand together with

vulnerable populations, partners and stakeholders in pursuit of efforts towards the protection of civilians across the continent.