



**STATEMENT BY
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**ON THE OCCASION OF THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 2020
AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DAY**

**UNDER THE THEME:
“SILENCING THE GUNS AND DEEPENING THE CULTURE OF HUMAN
AND PEOPLES’ RIGHTS: THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES
OF COVID-19 IN AFRICA”**



Dear Fellow Africans:

Addis Ababa, 21 October 2020: I wish to begin by wishing you all “**a happy 2020 Africa Human Rights Day**”.

On this auspicious Africa Human Rights Day (AHRD), I am pleased to convey to all Africans and lovers of our dear continent the renewed hope and commitment to the promotion and protection of human and peoples’ rights as enshrined in the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR).

Every year, the African Union (AU) has sets aside the 21st October to commemorate the Africa Human Rights Day. This year, the celebration is taking place under the theme “**Silencing the Guns and Deepening the Culture of Human and Peoples’ Rights: the Opportunities and Challenges of COVID-19 in Africa**”, which is specially crafted to promote the AU’s agenda of silencing the guns in Africa, bearing in mind the ongoing challenges of COVID-19, and to maximizing every opportunities therein to deepen the culture of human and peoples’ rights in Africa. Thus, this year’s celebration, is meant to, among other things, consolidate on the gains made so far in silencing the guns in Africa. But most importantly, to harp on the responsibility of AU Member States to bring peace and tranquility in each and every part of the continent.

Commemorating human rights connotes different things to different people globally. For us as Africans, it is a reminder of our past history - the past human rights abuses, including denial of political self-determination through colonization and apartheid and a reflection on ongoing human rights violations with a determination to never again permit such human rights violations and a re-commitment to the culture, values and principles that human rights stand for. The celebration of this event is primarily geared towards promoting and protecting the human and peoples’ rights as enshrined in the African Union Human Rights instruments as the foundation for building and sustaining an enduring peace that will pave the way for the development that we all want and deserve as Africans.

As we grapples with the challenges of COVID-19 - including human rights violations, poverty, and unemployment amongst others, significant developments are underway in Africa, including the launching of the continental campaign to silence the guns in Africa. This key initiative requires a concurrent promotion of human and peoples’ rights to guarantee its intended impact and sustainability. The African Union and its Member States cannot accomplish this enormous task alone. All hands, including those of civil society and private sector, must be on deck for the full realization of this campaign through effective implementation of the Agenda 2063, the blue print for Africa’s development. This commitment will not only help Africa to deal with the challenges of COVID-19 but it will remains the surest path to Africa’s transformative agenda.

As part of its efforts to promote transparency, accountability, development as well as peace and security in Africa, the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government declared 2020 as the year of “**Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development**”. Bearing in mind the nexus between conflicts, insecurity and human rights violations and the dangers they posed to Africa’s

transformative and developmental agenda, the 2020 Africa Human Rights Day is dedicated to the prevention of conflicts through the promotion of human and peoples' rights. Therefore, this event is timely because silencing the Guns in Africa is a huge and collective responsibility and all hands must be together in order for this noble goal to be accomplished.

As Africa continues to be grapples with the challenge of establishing peace and development, numerous peace initiatives have been launched on the continent. Vast amounts of resources and energies had also been dispensed to craft and to promote peace agreements which have often collapsed under the weight of competing interests. Therefore, it is time for all the African people to re-commit themselves to be part of the peacebuilding processes that will promote the culture of human rights and peace on the continent.

To this end, the AU has resolved to collaborate more with Member States, Regional Economic Communities, private sector, development partners, civil society organizations amongst others, to silence the guns in Africa and to ensure its development and transformation.

On behalf of the African Union Commission, I wish all Africans and friends of Africa a happy 2020 Africa Human Rights Day.

I thank you.