

**Message by H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs Peace and Security
On the Occasion of the Commemoration of the International Human Rights Day**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 10 December 2021

On 10 December of every year, the world, including Africa celebrates the International Human Rights Day, the day when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948.

The Declaration set out a broad range of fundamental human rights and freedoms to which all of us, everywhere across the world, are entitled to, including the right to development. It guarantees our rights without distinction of nationality, place of residence, gender, national or ethnic origin, religion, language, or any other status.

Today, we celebrate the 73rd Anniversary of the Adoption of the UDHR, under the theme: "All Human, All Equal" in conformity with article one (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" and article 3 (1) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), which guarantees the equality of all before the law.

The UDHR and the ACHPR, compels us to ensure that the principles of equality and non-discrimination are at the center of the promotion and protection of human rights. Equality is indeed entrenched within the Agenda 2063 of the African Union and Agenda 2030 of the United Nations, as a pillar for sustainable development. Therefore, we must make more efforts to address inequality and find durable solutions to all forms of discrimination that are responsible for conflicts and insecurity in Africa and the world.

As we mark this year's International Human Rights day, let us renew our commitment to the promotion and protection of all human rights, being the inalienable entitlements of every human.

At the time of its adoption, the UDHR was perceived as an instrument to put an end to all human rights atrocities and violations, including discrimination and inequality. The Declaration was perceived, at the time, to be also the framework that would close political divides and create a sense of tolerance and oneness across all nations of the world. Today, the UDHR is still central to the efforts directed at promoting and securing human rights, thus bearing testimony to the extraordinary foresight and vision of its drafters. It continues to be a "common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations" aimed at securing the universal recognition, observance and realization of human rights.

Similarly, the African Human and Peoples' Rights System (AHPRS) with its various shared values instruments paved the way for the advancement of human rights, respect and protection in Africa. It also led to the creation of strategic measures to accelerate the

attainment of respect for human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment on the continent. The AHPRS and its instruments have an undeniable moral force and provides 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 are accepted as declaratory of broadly accepted goals and principles within Africa.

As part of the efforts made to enhance the promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights on the Continent, is the adoption of the Action Plan of the Human and Peoples' Rights Decade. The purpose of the Action Plan is to strengthen the African Human Rights System aiming at deepening the culture of democracy and human rights in conformity with the objectives of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other relevant instruments. The Action Plan seeks to address the current challenges in order to ensure effective promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights on the continent.

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