



## PRESS RELEASE

**CONSULTATION ON THE OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE  
AFRICAN UNION HUMAN RIGHTS MEMORIAL**

**Monrovia, Liberia, 08 June 2017:** The Department of Political Affairs of the African Union Commission in close collaboration with the Government of Liberia is organizing a three-day consultative meeting on the Operationalization of the African Union Human Rights Memorial Project in Monrovia, Liberia, on 08-10 June 2017.

The main purpose of the consultation is to select the winning design of the project in order to proceed with the construction of the memorial site and other annexes and buildings attached to it. The meeting will also finalize the vision, mission and structure of the memorial project.

The consultation brings together representatives from a selected number of Member States, other Departments of the AUC, Human Rights Experts, CSOs, Media and Academia.

During the Opening Ceremony, Remarks were made by Hon. Commissioner Bartholomew B. Colly, Acting Chairperson of the Independent National Commission for Human Rights of Liberia (INCHR), who welcomed participants to Monrovia. Hon. Commissioner made mentioned to the links between the AUHRM and the history of Liberia and Africa as a whole. He welcomed the initiative and called on the African Union and its Member States to expedite the process of building the memorial.

Also, a statement was delivered at the Opening Ceremony on behalf of H.E. Amb. Minata Samate Cessouma, Commissioner for Political Affairs of the African Union Commission by Amb. Ibrahim Mbaba Kamara, AU Special Representative and Head of the AU Liaison Office in the Republic of Liberia, who thanked the Government of Liberia for hosting this important meeting in the beautiful city of Monrovia.

Amb. Kamara also stated that “the Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU) a commitment was made to ensure continental promotion and protection of the human rights and peoples’ rights principles, and the responsibility to intervene in the case of crimes against humanity or genocide in any of its 55 Member States. This new AU principle of non-indifference to incidences of human rights has replaced the old doctrine of non-interference in internal affairs of Member States which was embraced by the Organization of the African Unity (OAU)”.



The Commissioner further added that “in April 2004, on the tenth anniversary of the commemoration of the genocide in Rwanda, the Permanent Representatives

Committee (PRC) of the AU passed a resolution, sponsored by Rwanda, designating 7<sup>th</sup> April as an annual commemoration day in the AU calendar in the same resolution, the PRC also decided to preserve part of Kerchele/*Alem Bekagn* prison, where the New AU Conference Building has been built, as a human rights memorial, dedicated in the first instance to the victims of the Red Terror and the Rwanda Genocide. The Assembly further mandated the AUC to “initiate steps to build a permanent memorial to the victims of human rights violations, including genocide, within the African Union headquarters”.

The consultation was declared opened on behalf of the Government of Liberia by H.E. Mr. Dehpue Y. Zuo, Deputy Minister for International Cooperation and Economic Integration. Mr. Zuo welcomed all participants to the city of Monrovia and reiterated the support of the government of Liberia to this important project.

He further made reference to the fact that on 28 January 2012, a foundation stone for the AUHRM was laid down by Heads of State and Government at the AU headquarters aimed at memorialising:

- The Slave Trade;
- The Colonialism;
- The Ethiopian Red Terror;
- The Apartheid in South Africa; and
- The Rwanda Genocide;

The Deputy Minister concluded by indicating calling on all AU Member States to support this important project. He further added that by raising the memorialisation profile within the AU, current and future generations of Africans will be informed about the causes, consequences and lessons of past conflicts and proceed with building the Africa We Want.

In light of presentations and the discussions that will take place, it is anticipated that the following are proposed outcomes of the Consultation:

- Select a design that will be erected as a permanent human rights memorial on the premises of AU’s new headquarters;
- The project will include an educational centre, which will provide the African people with the necessary historical background to past violations and serve as communication centre for researchers and experts working on human rights;
- The project should have a virtual presence (website) that will function as a hub for survivors, various memorial centres, museums, academic institutions, development partners and other interested parties.

It is expected that the Consultation will select the winning design of the project. It is also expected that the mission, vision and general structure of the AUHRM will be agreed on and recommended for endorsement by the Policy Organs of the AU.

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