



# NETWORK OF AFRICAN NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS

**Statement at the 67<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the  
African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights**

**Issued by the Network of African National Human Rights  
Institutions (NANHRI)**

November 13, 2020

**The Chairperson the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Dr. Solomon Dersso;**

**Honourable Members of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights;**

**Representatives of governments of Member States;**

**Representatives of African Union Commission and other AU Organs;**

**Representatives of Regional Economic Communities;**

**Representatives of National Human Rights Institutions;**

**Executive Director of the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies on behalf of the NGO Forum, Ms Hannah Foster**

**Representatives of Non-governmental Organizations;**

**Representatives of the Civil Society Organisations**

It is with profound honour that I address this distinguished gathering of the 67<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Our participation is an affirmation of the commitment of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions and its Members in contributing to the human rights agenda on the continent.

### **Honourable Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen**

This is a special year for us the Network of African NHRIs as we have also formally launched the National Human Rights Institutions' Forum (NHRIs Forum), which will be held ahead of the Ordinary Sessions of the African Commission. During this Forum, together with our members and other human rights actors, we shall interrogate the situation of human rights in Africa for a consolidated position on the way forward towards promoting and protecting human rights.

The NHRIs' Forum held virtually from 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020 deliberated the situation of human rights in Africa, with a specific focus on Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Tanzania and Cameroon. The Forum discussed the electoral situation of Cote d'Ivoire and Tanzania, both of which involved disruption of activities of the opposition parties, and interferences with the freedom of expression and right to information. It also discussed the civil unrests in Nigeria resulting from police brutality and the long-standing Anglophone crisis in Cameroon which has continued to disenfranchise the rights of innocent civilians. National Human

Rights Institutions in these countries reiterated their commitment to undertake their role and work actively towards ensuring the respect of human rights.

The Forum further noted that while human rights situation in some of these countries has continued to deteriorate, National Human Rights Institutions in undertaking their role as human defenders, are working in hostile environments. Delegates of the Forum called on African NHRIs to continually seek to ensure independence and plurality in their existence and to work with integrity and impartiality.

### **Honourable Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen**

The participants of the NHRIs Forum also launched the NHRIs' Guide for implementing the African Commission's Resolution on protection against violence and other human rights violations against persons on the basis of their real or imputed sexual orientation or gender identity (Resolution 275).

In a broader perspective, the Forum also discussed the state of implementation of the decisions of the regional treaty bodies in selected countries.

To enhance NHRIs role and contribution in the work of regional human rights bodies, an online information centre /Human Rights Mechanisms Database for NHRIs engagement with regional treaty bodies was also launched during the Forum. The database will provide our members and the public easy access to documents and information from all regional human rights mechanisms, collated in a centralised repository that is accessible publicly. The database also will ease the access to information submitted to the regional human rights bodies by NHRIs.

### **Honourable Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen**

The Network is seriously concerned by the alleged human rights violations in African countries where elections were held recently and the information that opposition leaders, CSOs, journalists among other human rights defenders have been muzzled.

We should quickly act to sensitize Member States before the situation of human rights violations become critical and life threatening.

### **Honourable Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen**

Although it is the prerogative of the government to maintain law and order, this must be done in accordance with the national law and regional and international human rights frameworks. NHRIs, CSOs and other human rights defenders including the media have a mandate to call on the government to comply with its obligations to maintain order, and

advise the State on the importance of being accommodative to divergent opinions for inclusive and consultative approaches to matters of national importance.

We, therefore, urge the African Commission to adopt a resolution on Tanzania and Nigeria with the aim of improving the human rights situation in these countries.

### **Honourable Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen**

At least 26 States in Africa<sup>1</sup> will have or have held elections in the year 2020. Some of the elections have been chaotic, leading to loss of lives and destruction of property during confrontations with security agents.

On this premise of political instability, we cannot deliver Agenda 2063 with such impunity and disregard of the rule of law.

We cannot deliver the **Africa We Want** when the sound of industries, businesses, innovations among other activities is muted by the blaring and blasting guns.

We cannot deliver on this big dream when the lives of the youth, who are the energy required to drive the socio-economic growth, are sniffed out during peaceful protests.

We cannot be proud of a fruitful future when the vulnerable groups- including women, children, the elderly, people living with disabilities- in our midst are **Left Behind** reeling in pain as a result of the skirmishes.

The power of a nation is measured not by its aggression against its people, but the use of these resources to secure the safety and future of its taxpayers, and ensuring the reign of the rule of law for good governance through independent institutions.

### **Honourable Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen**

In the same breath, the NHRIs Forum expressed concerns over the prolonged and protracted armed conflict in the Sahel region, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Mozambique, parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, among others.

We acknowledge efforts being put in place by the African Union Peace and Security Council. For instance, the AMISOM intervention in Somalia has brought relative calm in neutralising Al-Shabaab terror group.

On this note, we challenge the African Union Peace and Security Council to invoke the Constitutive Act of the African Union, and take appreciate measures in consultation with the States in question and resolve the conflicts.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.eisa.org/calendar.php>

### **Honourable Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen**

We call on the African Commission, to encourage Member States to enforce all national and regional human rights frameworks. It is also important for Member States in partnership with other actors like the NHRIs, to trigger and sustain institutional reforms, including the transforming police forces into services. This needs to be done within the frameworks of the regional and international guidelines.

The delegates of the NHRIs Forum emphasised the respect for the independence of institutions such as the NHRIs, the judicial system and parliament.

### **Honourable Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen**

On our part, we shall continue supporting the African Commission and the other treaty bodies. Now that we launched the NANHRI Regional Mechanisms Database, an online repository of the decisions of the regional treaty bodies we expect improvements in the role of NHRIs in following up implementation of the outcomes at the national level. On this note, allow me to call upon the African Commission and other regional bodies to continuously follow up on the implementation of their decisions. After the hearings and issuing of the verdict victims should not be left in anguish seeking redress or compensation.

### **Honourable Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen**

As I conclude, we request the States to engage all the national and international stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the socio-economic recovery plans from the Covid-19 crisis, and prioritise inclusive financial and technical contributions for sustainable Africa development.

**Thank you and I wish you fruitful deliberations!**

---