



SEVENTH AFRICAN UNION/NANHRI POLICY DIALOGUE ON THE STATE OF NHRIS IN AFRICA

Theme:

Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations: The Role of NHRIs and Other Human Rights Actors

DECLARATION AND CALL TO ACTION

BACKGROUND

1. The African Union/NANHRI Policy Dialogue (Policy Dialogue) on the State of National Human Rights Institutions in Africa, which takes place at the Headquarters of the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, is a joint initiative of the African Union Commission (AUC), the AU-Permanent Representatives Committee (AU-PRC) and the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI), with the support of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACtHPR), the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR), and the Raoul Wallenberg Institute for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (RWI).
2. The aim of this initiative is to foster dialogue among key actors on the continent to initiate and maintain strategic collaborations and insights that would lead to concrete actions regarding implementation of human rights commitments in Africa.
3. The Seventh Edition of the Policy Dialogue took place from 7-9 May 2025 under the theme "***Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations: The Role of NHRIs and Other Human Rights Actors***".
4. The Policy Dialogue participants included members of the AU-PRC, Representatives of relevant AU and Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Representatives of African National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), African Union (AU) organs with human rights mandate, Representatives of relevant UN human rights bodies, the diplomatic corps, experts, academics, civil society organizations (CSOs), the media, human rights defenders, and development partners.

5. The theme drew inspiration from the Decision of the AU Assembly of the Heads of State and Government (AU Assembly) at its 38th Ordinary Session (Assembly/AU/Dec.884 (XXXVII)) held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from February 15 – 16, 2025. At that meeting, the AU Assembly decided that the African Union Theme of the Year 2025 will focus on Reparatory Justice and Racial Healing under the Theme: **“Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations”**.¹
6. The African Union Executive Council Report on Reparations (EX.CL/1528 (XLV) Rev.1) underscores the urgent need for a structured, coordinated, and legally binding approach to reparatory justice. The report recognizes the long-standing impact of historical injustices—including colonial exploitation, slavery, apartheid, and systemic racial discrimination—which have led to economic, social, and political disparities.
7. During the Dialogue, participants deliberated upon among other things on the status of NHRIs in Africa in the context of best practices and challenges in relation to their establishment and operationalization; assessment of progress made in the implementation of commitments made from the 6th NANHRI-AUC Policy Dialogue under the theme: **“Championing A Human Rights Based Approach in the Implementation of the AfCFTA: The Role of NHRIs and Key Stakeholders”**; and the role of NHRIs in implementing the imperatives of the AU Theme of the Year 2025: **“Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations.”**

PREAMBLE

We, the Participants of the Seventh Policy Dialogue, convened at the 7th African Union Commission-Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (AUC-NANHRI) Policy Dialogue from 7-9 May 2025, at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, adopt the following Action Plan:

REAFFIRMING the obligations that African Union Member States have subscribed to under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Charter) and the confirmation of their responsibility in the Constitutive Act of the African Union, namely, to promote and protect human and peoples' rights on the African continent, particularly commitments under Article 3(h) of the AU Constitutive Act, Article 26 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the Paris Principles, highlighting the indispensable role of independent, effective, and adequately resourced National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs);

RECALLING the objectives outlined in the AU Human and Peoples' Rights Decade (2016-2026) and the AU Strategic Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Africa

¹ <https://au.int/en/summit/38>

(2024-2026), aiming at reinforcing a robust human rights culture through effective institutional collaboration across national, regional, and continental levels;

RECALLING the decision of the AU Heads of State and Assembly at its 38th Ordinary Session (Assembly/AU/Dec.884 (XXXVII) held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from February 15 – 16, 2025 where the Theme of the Year 2025 was determined to be “**Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations**” and the African Union Executive Council Report on Reparations (EX.CL/1528 (XLV) Rev.1). The latter document recognizes in detail the long-standing impact of historical injustices—including colonial exploitation, slavery, apartheid, and systemic racial discrimination—which have led to economic, social, and political disparities. It calls for the establishment of a comprehensive reparations’ framework, including:

- Legal redress mechanisms to ensure accountability.
- Financial and economic reparations for historically disadvantaged communities.
- Symbolic restitution and historical recognition, including formal apologies and the return of cultural artefacts.
- Institutional reforms to address systemic racial inequalities.
- Public education and awareness to foster reconciliation and historical truth-telling.

ACKNOWLEDGING that the theme of the previous (AUC-NANHRI) forum on “*Championing A Human Rights Based Approach in the Implementation of the AfCFTA: The Role of NHRIs and Key Stakeholders*” in the context of its relevance and inextricable link to realise the imperatives of the forum’s current theme on “Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations”;

STRESSING that reparative justice goes beyond financial compensation and should include, broadly speaking, reforming the global financial architecture to ensure equitable representation for Africa in shaping economic policies; harnessing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to boost intra-African trade and industrialization; fostering partnerships with the African diaspora to promote economic and cultural collaboration; accelerating African integration through the implementation of the AU Protocol on Free Movement of Persons to enhance regional cooperation;

RECOGNIZING the critical role of reparatory justice, beyond mere financial compensation, to encompass symbolic restitution, institutional reforms, cultural restoration, public education, and inclusive economic policies within the framework of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA);

RECALLING Assembly/AU/Dec.933(XXXVIII), by which the Assembly of the African Union adopted ‘Social Justice in Africa’ as a Flagship Initiative for the year 2025, with the objective of operationalizing the principles of social justice to drive inclusive and transformative development across the continent, including through the advancement of reparative justice to address historical injustices and systemic inequalities.

UNDERSCORING the central role of the African diaspora as the sixth region of the Union and a critical stakeholder in advancing the objectives of the 2025 Flagship Initiative on Social Justice. The diaspora not only contributes to Africa's development through remittances, knowledge transfer, and investment, but also plays a leading role in global advocacy for reparative justice.

RECOGNISING that the continued mobilization and engagement of Africans in the diaspora are essential in advancing the African Union's demand for recognition, redress, and restitution for the historical injustices of slavery, colonialism, and racial discrimination. Strengthening partnerships with diaspora communities is key to building a unified continental and global movement for reparations and ensuring that justice, equity, and dignity are restored to people of African descent worldwide.

APPRECIATING that there is a need to have a common understanding and agenda of promoting the attainment of Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations and that collaborating is essential to making progress in the pursuit of Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations;

CONSIDERING the paramount importance of ensuring that citizens of the continent fully understand and are aligned to the pursuit of Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations;

RECOGNISING the critical role of access to justice through the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights as an essential element for achieving reparatory justice for Africans and people of African descent;

CONSIDERING the crucial importance of ensuring the effective implementation of decisions of African human rights bodies as a foundational element for achieving reparatory justice for Africans and people of African descent;

ACKNOWLEDGING the pivotal role of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) in bridging communication between the African Union, Permanent Representatives Committee (AU-PRC), and NHRIs, and its significant efforts in promoting standardized legal frameworks and capacity-building across Africa;

COMMENDING the establishment of the African Union NHRIs Award and the dedicated efforts of the African Union Commission (AUC) to operationalize reparations and racial healing as a flagship project of the Union;

DECLARE AS FOLLOWS:

a) Commitment to Reparations

- Reiterate the urgent necessity of reparatory justice as integral to the advancement of human rights, socio-economic equity, and historical accountability in Africa.

b) National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)

- Urge NHRIs to enhance their capacities through comprehensive training, establishment of national reparations committees, and advocacy for robust legal frameworks that align with international and regional reparations standards.
- Encourage NHRIs to intensify strategic advocacy, litigation, public education, and community engagement to ensure inclusive and participatory reparations initiatives.

c) Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI)

- Call upon NANHRI to establish a Committee on reparations to streamline continental-level advocacy and facilitate knowledge exchange and technical support among NHRIs.
- Recommend NANHRI in consultation with other relevant stakeholders actively pursue an advisory opinion from the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights on reparations to guide and standardize continental approaches.

d) The African Union Commission (AUC)

- Appeal to the AU to expedite the establishment of a continental reparations fund to ensure sustainable resources for reparations-related initiatives.
- Urge the AU to facilitate South-South cooperation, promote strategic international partnerships, and lead the formulation and adoption of a Common African Position on Reparations.
- Encourage the AU to adopt a Continental Convention on reparations for historical injustices

e) RECs/RMs

- Encourage RECs to integrate reparatory justice into their regional policies, frameworks, and strategic plans, thus supporting the harmonization and effective implementation of reparations initiatives at the regional level.
- Urge RECs to facilitate regional dialogues, capacity-building programs, and exchange of best practices among Member States to strengthen regional coordination and collaboration on reparations.
- Call upon RECs to support Member States and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) within their respective regions by mobilizing resources, technical expertise, and fostering regional advocacy for reparatory justice.

f) International Actors

- Invite international actors, including UN agencies, NGOs, and academic institutions, to actively support African reparations efforts through technical assistance, advocacy, and resource mobilization.

Affirm our collective commitment to advancing reparations and restorative justice across Africa and declare the following actionable strategies:

I. Institutional Capacities

Capacity Building for Advocacy and Implementation

- Conduct comprehensive training sessions for NHRI staff, stakeholders, academia, media, governmental agencies, and communities on reparations advocacy, human rights mandates, and media engagement.
- Collaborate with AU-PRC to secure technical support and dedicated resources.

Establishment of National Reparations Committees and Action Plans

- Advocate for and facilitate the establishment of dedicated national reparations committees or task forces to document injustices, construct historical narratives, and coordinate domestic reparations efforts.
- Develop and implement detailed National Action Plans (NAPs) focusing on reparations, integrating focal points within NHRIs and mandatory reporting requirements.

Legislative Framework Strengthening

- Support ratification and domestication of regional and international reparations instruments.
- Develop comprehensive legislative guides and advocate for national laws addressing historical injustices such as colonization, slavery, apartheid, and others.

II. Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

Standardized Reporting and Timelines

- Develop standardized reporting templates and establish clear timelines for tracking reparations progress at national and continental levels.

Integration of Community Voices

- Ensure structured storytelling methodologies are integrated into reporting, with robust feedback mechanisms involving CSOs, CBOs, other relevant organisations, and affected communities.

Technology and Data Collection

- Leverage community-driven technological tools to enhance monitoring capacities.
- Establish a digital platform hosted by NANHRI for knowledge exchange, best practices, and reparations updates.

III. Collaborative Strategies and Policy Dialogue

Cross-border and Comparative Analysis

- Conduct cross-border comparative studies of restorative justice initiatives to identify replicable successful strategies.

Coordination and Institutional Collaboration

- Establish institutional coordinating committees within NHRIs dedicated to reparations.
- Formalize continuous policy dialogues between NANHRI and the AU-PRC as Statutory meeting.
- Establish a continental implementation committee composed of relevant stakeholders (AU, RECs/RMs, NANHRI, NHRIs, PALU, etc.):
- Commit to regular review and strategic updates at subsequent AUC-NANHRI Policy Dialogues to ensure continued relevance, effectiveness, and responsiveness to emerging human rights challenges.

Political Influence and Policy Development

- AU-PRC to influence political commitments among Member States actively.
- Develop and disseminate an AU advisory document and comprehensive AU Action Plan delineating NHRI roles and Member State obligations.

IV. Stakeholder Engagement and Awareness Raising

Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

- Organize targeted sensitization workshops involving judiciary, parliamentarians, media, CSOs, traditional and religious leaders, and executive bodies.
- Facilitate legislative reforms and judicial sensitization.

Public Awareness and Media Engagement

- Launch extensive public awareness campaigns via local media and social platforms in local languages.
- Train paralegals and community champions in human rights advocacy.
- Develop and disseminate advocacy materials for NHRIs.

V. Role of Stakeholders

National Human Rights Institutions

a) Capacity Building

NHRIs should enhance their internal capacities by training staff, commissioners, academia, media, communities, Parliament, government and other state institutions as well as other stakeholders to effectively engage with reparations issues and implement relevant strategies. NHRIs should include reparation of justice in their strategic plan and adopt innovative strategies to address the issue of reparation.

b) Establishment of National Reparations Committees

NHRIs should advocate for, and facilitate, the establishment of dedicated national reparations committees or task forces to systematically document injustices, build historical narratives, develop national reparations agendas, and coordinate reparations efforts domestically.

c) Development and Strengthening of Legal Frameworks

NHRIs should actively advocate for ratification and domestication of international and regional reparations instruments and encourage Member States to strengthen existing national legal frameworks or establish new specific reparations legislation. This advocacy efforts should include ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Establishment of the African Court and the deposit of the Article 34(6) Declaration as a necessary step towards strengthening access to remedy and reparatory justice within the continent.

d) Public Awareness, Education, and Community Engagement

NHRIs should undertake public awareness campaigns, develop advocacy papers translated into local languages, and leverage media and technology to educate and inform citizens broadly. They should integrate community perspectives, storytelling, and feedback mechanisms into reparations monitoring and reporting.

e) Develop National Action Plans (NAPs) on Reparations

NHRIs should advocate for the development of National Action Plans (NAPs) on reparations to include the development or strengthening of legal frameworks on reparations. This may include considering developing a model law on reparations to enable Member States speak the same language and harmonize debates as well as encourage the sharing of good practices between countries, particularly those who have the experience on reparations and those that have national strategies or laws.

f) Increased implementation of decisions of African human rights bodies

NHRIs should appoint specific focal persons or dedicated teams to be responsible for tracking, reporting, and following up on implementation issues.

The Network of African National Human Rights Institutions

a) NANHRI Committee on Reparations

NANHRI should establish a dedicated committee on reparations that will be responsible for facilitating information flow between the African Union, the Permanent Representatives Committee (AU-PRC), and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs). This committee would track commitments at the continental level and support NHRIs in communicating national-level developments and community perspectives.

b) Submission of Advisory Opinion to the African Court

NANHRI in collaboration with other stakeholders to pursue an advisory opinion from the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights regarding reparations.

c) Advocate of Model Law and policies on Reparations

NANHRI to advocate for a model law on reparations to guide the African Union and its Member States to adopt standardized legal frameworks to speak the same language, harmonize debates, and effectively facilitate reparations.

d) Capacity Building and Knowledge Exchange

NANHRI should coordinate comprehensive capacity-building initiatives and establish structured platforms to facilitate knowledge sharing, best practices exchange, and technical assistance among NHRIs, the AU, academia, civil society, and international partners on reparations issues.

e) Standardized Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms

NANHRI should develop standardized reporting guidelines and templates for NHRIs to systematically document progress, community engagement, and implementation efforts on reparations. These guidelines should ensure consistent and comprehensive monitoring at national and continental levels.

f) Increased implementation of decisions of African human rights bodies

NANHRI should create a dedicated Task Force within its network, specifically tasked with coordinating and increasing NHRIs involvement in increasing the implementation of decisions from African human rights bodies.

The African Union Commission

a) Promote Strategic International Partnerships

The AUC should explore and enhance strategic partnerships to promote sustainable resource (technical and financial) mobilization to support the implementation of reparatory justice initiatives.

b) Facilitate South-South Cooperation

The AUC should actively facilitate and encourage South-South cooperation by promoting bilateral and multilateral engagements among African states. This would involve sharing good practices, lessons learned, and document experiences from countries already implementing reparations strategies or laws.

c) Support Institutionalization of Reparations Committees

The AUC should support member states in institutionalizing reparations committees or dedicated national structures within their jurisdictions. These bodies would manage reparations processes systematically and effectively, ensuring consistent implementation across the continent.

d) Common African Position on Reparations

The AUC should lead efforts to define clearly and achieve consensus on a Common African Position on reparations, incorporating legal, structural, and financial considerations. This position should build upon previous AU declarations (including AU Assembly Decisions: Assembly/AU/Dec.884 (XXXVII) and Assembly /AU /Dec .847(XXVI) as well as the Accra Proclamation on Reparations, amongst others) and serve as a unified framework for advocacy and negotiations at international forums.

The RECs/RMs

a) Capacity Building and Technical Support

RECs should support capacity-building initiatives within their regions by mobilizing technical expertise and resources, thus enabling effective implementation of reparations-related policies and initiatives at national levels.

b) Resource Mobilization and Advocacy

RECs should assist in mobilizing regional resources, including technical and financial support, and actively advocate for reparations at both regional and international forums to bolster Member States' efforts in reparatory justice.

c) Support Institutionalization of Reparations Committees

RECs should encourage and assist Member States within their regions to establish dedicated national reparations committees or task forces, ensuring structured and systematic approaches towards reparations initiatives.

International Development Partners

a) Support for Resource Mobilization and Optimization

International actors should actively support the mobilization and optimization of resources - particularly human and technical – to support African National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and civil society organizations. This may include providing capacity-building initiatives, technical assistance, knowledge exchange, and other relevant resources to effectively engage with, and implement, reparations agendas.

b) Engagement in Strategic Partnerships

International development partners, particularly the OHCHR and other UN agencies (e.g., UNFPA, UNESCO, UNDP), international NGOs, and academic institutions should engage strategically with African states and regional bodies to advocate for reparations and offer necessary support including resource mobilization, policy development, technical assistance, and advocacy campaigns.

c) Advocacy and Awareness Raising

African private actors should collaborate in developing and disseminating advocacy and educational materials, facilitating broad public awareness campaigns, and contributing to international advocacy efforts aimed at highlighting the legitimacy and necessity of reparations for Africans and people of African descent.

Adopted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 9 May 2025.