



15TH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

NETWORK OF AFRICAN NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS (NANHRI)

Theme: Original Aspects of African Human Rights Instruments and Jurisprudence

“Leveraging African Human Rights Instruments and Jurisprudence for Strengthened Human Rights Promotion, Protection, and Implementation: The Strategic Role of African National Human Rights Institutions”

YAOUNDE DECLARATION AND CALL TO ACTION

CONTEXT

1. **Pursuant to Article 56 of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) Constitution**, NANHRI convenes a Biennial Conference every two years, during which the General Assembly takes place. The Biennial Conference serves as a continental platform for collective reflection, peer learning, strategic engagement, and the adoption of declarations and action-oriented outcomes to guide the work of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) at national, and continental levels.
2. **The 15th NANHRI Biennial Conference was held physically in Yaoundé, Republic of Cameroon**, on 5–6 February 2026, in collaboration with the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC).
3. The Conference brought together representatives of African National Human Rights Institutions, African human rights bodies, pupils and students of higher education institutions, government authorities, civil society, academia, development partners, traditional rulers, and other relevant stakeholders.
4. **The 15th Biennial Conference was convened under the theme “Original Aspects of African Human Rights Instruments and Jurisprudence,”** with a particular focus on *Leveraging African Human Rights instruments and Jurisprudence for Strengthened Human Rights Promotion, Protection, and on the Strategic Role of African National Human Rights Institutions in this regard.*
5. **The Conference provided a structured space for critical reflection on the distinct normative architecture of the African human rights system**, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, its Protocols, other Africa-specific human rights

instruments, and the jurisprudence of African human rights and judicial bodies. The Conference further examined the extent to which these original African norms and interpretive practices are translated into tangible protection outcomes at national level.

6. Participants expressed their gratitude to the Cameroon Human Rights Commission and the Secretariat of the NANHRI for the excellent organization of the Conference and the warm hospitality. Participants welcomed the enriching exchange of perspectives from NHRIs, continental and international human rights bodies and mechanisms, civil society and academia.

PREAMBLE

7. **CONSIDERING** the obligations provided for in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the responsibility affirmed in the Constitutive Act of the African Union to promote and protect human and peoples' rights across the African continent;
8. **RECALLING** the foundational role of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights as a distinctive and comprehensive human rights framework that integrates civil, political, economic, social, cultural, collective, and peoples' rights, as well as individual duties, and affirms the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights;
9. **RECALLING** the aspirations and commitments of Agenda 2063, particularly Aspiration 3 on "An Africa of Good Governance, Democracy, Respect for Human Rights, Justice and the Rule of Law," which reinforces the centrality of African human rights instruments in continental transformation;
10. **RECOGNISING** that African human rights instruments, including the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Protocol on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa, the Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa, the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), and the African Youth Charter, reflect Africa's historical experiences, socio-cultural realities, and development challenges;
11. **ACKNOWLEDGING** the evolving jurisprudence of African human rights and judicial bodies, including the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which has interpreted the content of African human rights norms and strengthened their relevance for domestic implementation and accountability;
12. **CONSIDERING** the complementarity between African human rights instruments and international human rights instruments, as both systems are rooted in shared normative principles, with universal instruments establishing baseline standards applicable to all persons while African mechanisms contextualize and reinforce these norms, thereby enhancing the coherence, legitimacy, and effectiveness of the international human rights standards as a whole;
13. **RECALLING** Article 26 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which provides that the independence of institutions entrusted with the promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights shall be guaranteed;
14. **RECALLING FURTHER** Resolution 370 (LX) 2017 of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Granting of Affiliate Status to National Human Rights Institutions, which establishes the formal basis for structured engagement between National Human

Rights Institutions and the African Commission, and by extension with other African Union human rights bodies, in the promotion, protection, and implementation of African human rights norms;

15. **RECALLING FURTHER** the Guidelines for Granting Affiliate and Observation Status to National Human Rights Institutions before the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which establish the formal framework for structured engagement between National Human Rights Institutions and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, including in relation to monitoring, reporting, follow-up on decisions and recommendations, and the promotion and implementation of children's rights under the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child;
16. **RECOGNISING** that African human rights jurisprudence, including binding judgments, decisions, recommendations, General Comments, and other interpretive outputs, constitutes an essential component of the African human rights system and plays a critical role in shaping the meaning, scope, and application of human rights obligations at the national level;
17. **RECOGNISING** the **distinct but complementary roles** of **African Union political organs**, which provide policy direction, coordination, and political oversight, and **African human rights bodies**, which exercise independent interpretive, quasi-judicial, and adjudicatory mandates, and **EMPHASISING** that effective protection of human rights in Africa depends on coherence and mutual reinforcement between these institutional functions;
18. **RECOGNISING FURTHER** the strategic role of NHRIs as part of the continental compliance ecosystem, linking national implementation with reporting, follow-up, investigation, and monitoring obligations under African Union human rights instruments;
19. **NOTING WITH CONCERN** that, despite the normative richness and contextual relevance of African human rights instruments and jurisprudence, significant gaps persist between formal commitments and the lived realities of rights-holders, particularly women, children, persons with disabilities, older persons, refugees, internally displaced persons, and young people;
20. **NOTING** the increasing pressures on independent institutions, including NHRIs, arising from shrinking civic space, threats to independence, and resource constraints, which undermine effective implementation of African human rights standards;
21. **RE-AFFIRMING** the central role of National Human Rights Institutions, in accordance with the Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (the Paris Principles), in promoting and protecting human rights, by advising governments, monitoring compliance with international and regional obligations, reporting, handling complaints, conducting investigations, and facilitating access to justice and remedies;
22. **RE-AFFIRMING FURTHER** the renewed commitment of National Human Rights Institutions to fully leverage African human rights instruments to strengthen the effective realization of human rights in Africa, while using a human rights-based approach, transcending philanthropic logics, to guarantee the dignity of all Africans;
23. We, the **African National Human Rights Institutions members of NANHRI participating in the 15th Biennial Conference**, call on:

NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS TO:

- a. **Commit to positioning the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other core international human rights instruments as a guiding framework for the work of NHRI on** civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights;
- b. **Intensify advocacy for ratification of all African human rights instruments**, including the Protocols on the African Court, the rights of women (Maputo), older persons, and persons with disabilities;
- c. **Systematically integrate African human rights instruments and jurisprudence into routine NHRI functions**, including monitoring, complaints handling, investigations, advisory opinions, reporting, and public engagement, support for victims to access justice, rather than treating such instruments and jurisprudence as episodic or purely referential sources;
- d. **Routinise the use and follow-up of African human rights jurisprudence and soft-law outputs**, including judgments, decisions, recommendations, general comments, and Guidelines of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, through structured tracking, documentation, and public reporting mechanisms;
- e. **Act as compliance catalysts for African Court judgments**, including by monitoring implementation, engaging relevant executive and legislative authorities, supporting victims beyond the delivery of judgments, and promoting sustained domestic follow-up to ensure effective and timely compliance;
- f. **Strengthen institutional practices for follow-up on African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights outputs**, including through the establishment of tracking matrices, follow-up hearings, engagement with parliamentary and oversight bodies, the judiciary and periodic public reporting aimed at countering narratives that frame such outputs as optional or discretionary, including providing briefings, implementation assessments, and legislative reform proposals informed by African human rights instruments and jurisprudence;
- g. **Commit to peer learning and regional cooperation within the NANHRI framework**, including the exchange of good practices, challenges, and institutional models for effective implementation, compliance monitoring, and follow-up across different national contexts;
- h. **Intensify advocacy, documentation, and strategic litigation activities to positively advance the human rights situation**, including through amicus curiae interventions;
- i. **Define a coherent strategy for capacity building of relevant national actors**, including actors in the judicial system and civil society organizations with a view to better knowledge and better ownership of the instruments and jurisprudence of African human rights mechanisms.

AFRICAN STATES TO:

- a. **Re-affirm** the central role of National Human Rights Institutions, in accordance with the Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (the Paris Principles), in promoting and protecting human rights, including through advising governments, monitoring compliance with international and regional human rights obligations, handling complaints, reporting, conducting investigations, and facilitating access to effective remedies;

- b. **Strengthen the domestication and implementation of African human rights instruments**, including by ensuring that legal, policy and institutional frameworks give full effect to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, its Protocols, and other Africa-specific human rights instruments and further call on African States to comply with the normative outputs of African human rights mechanisms.
- c. **Establish and strengthen national implementation, reporting and follow-up mechanisms** to support the enforcement of the international and African human rights instruments;
- d. **Address structural and systemic barriers to the protection, promotion and monitoring women's rights, children's rights, disability rights, older persons' rights, and the rights of displaced persons and young people**, including through eradicating barriers relating to legal reform, political resistance, data gaps, institutional fragmentation, budgeting, and social norms;
- e. **Ensure that responses to displacement, conflict, and humanitarian situations are grounded in rights-based accountability approaches**, rather than limited to security-centred approaches, and that the African Union Refugee Convention, Kampala Convention, and African Youth Charter are effectively operationalised;
- f. **Address the root causes of displacement, including conflicts, climate change, and economic causes, while fostering genuine cooperation between States within and outside Africa**;
- g. **Provide National Human Rights Institutions with adequate resources, constitutional and legal frameworks, and guarantees of independence**, financial autonomy, investigative authority in line with the Paris Principles, to enable them to carry out their mandates effectively, including monitoring compliance with African human rights instruments and jurisprudence;
- h. Ensure that national budgets include dedicated allocations to monitor the implementation of human rights instruments and engagement with African regional and international human rights mechanisms.

AFRICAN UNION ORGANS TO:

- a. Provide further **political, institutional, and policy support for the effective implementation of African human rights instruments and jurisprudence**, including through coordinated action by relevant African Union organs, departments, and institutions;
- b. Strengthen the role of the African Governance Architecture (AGA) in coordinating implementation, monitoring compliance trends, and building synergies between political and human rights institutions of the AU;
- c. **Enhance system-wide follow-up and accountability frameworks for the implementation of African human rights obligations**, including by supporting coordination between political organs, sectoral bodies, and national institutions responsible for implementation;
- d. **Promote coherence between African Union policy frameworks, governance initiatives, and African human rights standards**, including by ensuring that continental policies, strategies, and development agendas are aligned with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and its Protocols;

- e. **Support and facilitate structured engagement between African Union organs and National Human Rights Institutions**, including through dialogue platforms, policy consultations, and cooperation mechanisms that reinforce domestic implementation and accountability;
- f. **Strengthen the role of the Pan-African Parliament in advancing human rights accountability**, including through legislative oversight, policy dialogue, and cooperation with African human rights bodies and National Human Rights Institutions.

AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS BODIES TO:

- a. **Strengthen monitoring and compliance mechanisms** relating to decisions, recommendations, concluding observations, and interpretive outputs, including through clearer guidance to States on implementation and structured follow-up processes;
- b. **Enhance coordination and complementarity among African human rights bodies**, including between the African Court, the African Commission, and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, in order to promote consistency, coherence, and cumulative impact of jurisprudence and recommendations;
- c. **Support the dissemination and domestic implementation of African human rights jurisprudence**, including by engaging National Human Rights Institutions as key partners in the implementation ecosystem in tracking, reporting, and follow-up processes; this includes translating jurisprudence into accessible formats, issuing NHRI guidance notes for government institutions, and integrating African human rights standards into case-handling manuals, training curricula, and public education tools;
- d. Enhance prevention and early-warning functions, including through rapid communication channels with NHRIs during situations of crisis, conflict, mass violations, or shrinking civic space;
- e. **Strengthen engagement with National Human Rights Institutions on implementation challenges**, including through technical guidance, information-sharing, and dialogue aimed at translating regional jurisprudence into digitally accessible and user-friendly multilingual summaries of publications and decisions to enhance effective national and sub-national protection outcomes.

CIVIL SOCIETY TO:

- a. **Engage actively with National Human Rights Institutions, governments, regional mechanisms** in monitoring, documentation and advocacy to strengthen the domestic implementation of African human rights instruments and related jurisprudence, including sustained community-level follow-up and evidence generation ;
- b. **Contribute to national, regional, and international reporting and review processes**, including through shadow and parallel reporting, while supporting survivor- and rights-holder-centred accountability efforts, through strategic advocacy, community mobilisation, and assistance to victims in accessing and engaging national accountability mechanisms;
- c. **Collaborate with National Human Rights Institutions and other oversight bodies** to enhance the visibility, dissemination, follow-up, and domestic implementation of decisions, recommendations, and jurisprudence of African human rights bodies, particularly at the

sub-national level while meaningful participation marginalised population groups and safeguarding civic space.

ACADEMIA TO:

- a. **Undertake rigorous, context-sensitive research and analysis** on African human rights instruments, jurisprudence, and implementation practices, with a view to strengthening evidence-based policy, advocacy, and institutional reform;
- b. **Support capacity-building and knowledge development** for National Human Rights Institutions and other accountability actors through training, curriculum development, judicial education, , and support the creation of an online depository portal for capacity building materials and dissemination of African human rights jurisprudence;
- c. **Promote the study and teaching** of African legal philosophies, including ubuntu, communitarian ethics, and indigenous conceptions of justice, and how they shape African human rights jurisprudence;
- d. **Contribute to critical reflection and evaluation** of implementation gaps, compliance patterns, and institutional practices, including through independent research that informs long-term strengthening of the African human rights system.

DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS TO:

- a. **Provide technical and financial support, including capacity-building, led by national priorities** to strengthen National Human Rights Institutions and their Network's ability to monitor, and follow up on African human rights instruments and jurisprudence;
- b. **Support the development of institutional systems and tools**, including tracking mechanisms, data systems, and compliance-monitoring frameworks, that enable sustained domestic engagement with African human rights standards;
- c. **Prioritise long-term, implementation-focused support**, including support for sub-national engagement, peer learning, and regional cooperation initiatives within the NANHRI framework.

We, the Members of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions, participating in the 15th Biennial Conference, hereby adopt the Yaounde Declaration on Leveraging African Human Rights Instruments and Jurisprudence for Strengthened Human Rights Promotion, Protection, and Implementation, as a collective framework to guide the work of African National Human Rights Institutions at national, and continental levels.

We, the NANHRI members, agree to host the next Biennial Conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2027.

Done and adopted in Yaounde, Republic of Cameroon, on 6 February 2026.