



THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS

Press Release 18.01.2016 at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: LAUNCH OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE DECRIMINALIZATION OF ABORTION IN AFRICA: WOMEN AND GIRLS IN AFRICA ARE COUNTING ON US TO SAVE THEIR LIVES!

The African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) through the mechanism of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa, in line with its Resolution on the Health and Reproductive Rights of Women in Africa, 2007 and with its commitment through a communique on accountability for women's reproductive health taken in March 2015 in Nairobi; has today launched a continental Campaign for the Decriminalization of Abortion in Africa. The ACHPR has done this in order to bring attention to unsafe abortion which poses a serious threat to women's and girl's rights to sexual and reproductive health.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), unsafe abortion continues to be a public health crisis and one of the largest contributors of maternal mortality and morbidity in Africa, accounting for up to 30% of maternal deaths in many sub-Saharan countries. The WHO estimates that over 6 million unsafe abortions occur in Africa resulting in 29,000 deaths and countless serious injuries and disabilities every year for poor, mostly rural based African women and girls under the age 25.

The ACHPR, is concerned that these deaths occur partly because of laws that criminalize abortion on the presumption that the threat of arrest or imprisonment will prevent women and girls from having abortions. We agree with the WHO that making abortion illegal does not reduce abortion rates and neither does it deter women from having abortions. What instead happens is that more women are pushed to the backstreet where they access unsafe abortions. It is time to bring a stop to these deaths.

The ACHPR is committed to bringing States into compliance with their commitments under the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol); the Maputo Plan of Action; and the Campaign for the Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA).

To that end the ACHPR calls on Heads of State and Government to demonstrate their commitment to preserving the lives of African women and girls by decriminalizing abortion in their respective countries.

Hon. Commissioner Lucy Asuagbor

Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women