

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF PARTICIPANTS OF THE FORUM OF NGOs**

**AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE**

**62<sup>ND</sup> ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON**

**HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS**

**25<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2018**

**PALAIS DES CONGRES– NOUAKCHOTT, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF MAURITANIA**

Your Excellency, The President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania,

Honourable Chairperson of The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR),  
Madame Soyata Maiga; Hon. Vice Chairperson, Commissioner Lawrence Mute and Honourable  
Members of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights;

Honourable Ministers of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania,

Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps

Representatives of the Network of National Human Rights Institutions;

Distinguished Members of the NGO Forum Steering Committee;

Representatives of National and International NGOs;

Representatives of the Press;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

All other protocols respectfully observed

It is indeed an honour for me to deliver this statement on behalf of colleagues of the Forum on the Participation of NGOs in the 62<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. Allow me at the onset, to congratulate the Government and People of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania for their hospitality to representatives of the African civil society since their arrival on Mauritanian soil.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The NGOs Forum and the 36<sup>th</sup> African Human Rights Book Fair, organised and facilitated by the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies was held at the Royal Suites Hotel from 21<sup>st</sup>- 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2018.

It was attended by 216 representatives (88 females and 128 males) from 30 African countries: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, DR Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco,

Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zimbabwe

3 European countries: France, United Kingdom, Switzerland and 1 Americas - the United State of America

Your Excellency, Honourable Members of the African Commission

A copy of the report including the adopted resolutions and recommendations will be forwarded to your distinguished body.

Kindly allow me, therefore, to present a few highlights of the said deliberations.

The Forum was officially opened by Hon. Cheikh Tourad Ould Abdel Malick, Commissioner, Commission on Human Rights and Humanitarian Action of the Republic of Mauritania and officially closed by Hon. Rassoul Ould El Khal, Deputy Commissioner from the same office. The Forum was also addressed by Commissioner Remy Lumbu Ngoy on behalf of the African Commission, representing the Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Mr. Mamadou Sarr (FONAD President), and **Mouhamedou Ould Sidi** President (Platforme).

The Forum acknowledged that while there is marked progress in some countries, human rights violations continue to take place in different countries on daily basis thereby under-minding the calling on States to ensure that rights and freedoms of citizens are guaranteed should be a top concern.

During the Forum, participants actively engaged in discussion in the 10 panels, some of which are:

- 1. Using the law at national and regional level to protect the rights of women and girls: focus on youth, FGM and reproductive health rights**
- 2. Displaced women's rights to housing, land and property**
- 3. An African perspective on access to remedy, with focus on attacks on human rights defenders working on business and human rights**
- 4. The use of early warning indicators from a human rights perspective**
- 5. Enforced Disappearances in Africa: the fight for truth and justice**
- 6. The role of CSOs/NGOs in the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in the decriminalization campaign**
- 7. Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Africa: concept of hub cities, women human rights defenders and the growing social crisis in Central Africa**
- 8. Realizing sexual reproductive health needs and rights of young people: the need for rights-based approach**
- 9. Role of civil society in preserving the African human rights system: threats and perspectives**
- 10. Challenges of the fight against slavery in Africa**

The publication ‘Growing Social Crisis in Central Africa: Fundamental Freedoms and Human Rights Defenders Index 2017’ was also launched by the Central Africa Human Rights Defenders.

**There were 14 working groups on the following themes:**

- 1. Prisons, Conditions of Detention/Policing in Africa**
- 2. Rights of Women in Africa**
- 3. Human Rights Defenders/Freedom of Association and Assembly in Africa**
- 4. Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa**
- 5. Prevention of Torture in Africa**
- 6. Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Internally Displaced Persons and Migrants in Africa**
- 7. Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Africa**
- 8. Rights of Older Persons and People with Disabilities in Africa**
- 9. Extractive Industries; Environment and Human Rights Violations**
- 10. Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI)**
- 11. Peace and Security**
- 12. Rights of Youth and Children**
- 13. Enforced Disappearances**
- 14. Independent of Judges and lawyers**

At the end of the Forum, the 6 country resolutions were adopted the following country resolutions on: Cameroon, Guinea Conakry, Eritrea, Libya, South Sudan and Sudan.

Five thematic resolutions were adopted on Youth and Children, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Enforced Disappearances, Freedom of Information and Expression and Persons with Disabilities and finally a thematic recommendation on the rights of Women in Africa. The said resolutions and recommendation will be forwarded to the African Commission.

On Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Migrants and IDPs, the Forum calls upon the States to reframe from opening and operating detention centres, deporting migrants and criminalizing migration. It further calls on the African Commission to promote the universal ratification, domestication and implementation of the Kampala Convention.

Considering that 2018 would mark the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the entry into force of the Maputo Protocol, the Forum commended State Parties to the Protocol and calls upon the African Commission to urge State Parties to report on the Protocol when reporting under the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights.

On People with Disability and Older Persons, the Forum congratulated the African Union on adopting the Protocol on the African Charter on Older Persons in Africa urging governments to speedily ratify to ensure its entry into force. The Forum urges the African Commission to call upon Member States to ratify the UN Convention on the rights of people with Disability without further delay.

Madam Chairperson, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

States that have ratified, domesticated and or implemented various human rights instruments at the regional and international levels were commended while the Forum continues to urge to States, that are yet to ratify, to do so without further delay.

The Forum would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the States of Angola, Botswana, Eritrea, and Nigeria for the submission of their state reports for review by the African Commission.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Permit me to reiterate the profound appreciation of the Forum to the African Commission for the collaboration and support. Five Commissioners of the African Commission participated in the Forum and chaired various panels in addition to delivering statements.

Madam Chairperson, Distinguished Commissioners,

The African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies hereby acknowledges the financial support received from the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS); IPAS and the Civil Society Consortium under the PANAF Project comprising International Commission of Jurists (branches of European Institution and Kenya), the Norwegian Refugee Council and ACDHRS which supported the participation of a number of participants in the Forum and Session.

Madam Chairperson

On behalf of the participants of the Forum

Excellencies, Madam Chairperson, Hon. Chairperson and Members of ACHPR,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I wish to congratulate the Islamic Republic of Mauritania on hosting on the 62<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights as well as the forthcoming African Union Summit to be held in July this year.

I thank you for your kind attention.

*ACDHRS*

*25<sup>th</sup> April, 2018*