

**VOTE OF THANKS BY CIVIL SOCIETY TO OUTGOING HON.
COMMISSIONERS OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN
AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS
27TH APRIL, 2019
JOLIE VILLE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE
SHARM EL SHEIKH, SOUTH SINAI, ARAB REPUBLIC OF
EGYPT**

Your Excellencies, Honourable Guests, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen
(with Permission to Stand on existing Protocol)

The African Human Rights family are gathered here today to pay tribute to four outgoing Honourable Commissioners of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, namely Commissioners Soyata Maiga (2007-2019), Lucy Asuagbor (2010-2019), Yeung Kam John Yeung Sik Yeun (2007-2019) and Lawrence Mute (2013-2019) respectively.

My humble task this morning is to give the vote of thanks on behalf of all my colleagues, the civil society communities, proud members of this family and stakeholders of the ACHPR in its noble task of promoting, protecting and defending human rights on this great continent of ours, and indeed interpreting the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I bring our greetings to all of us here as I proceed to pay tribute to these legal luminaries, these illustrious daughters and sons of Africa who have left no stones unturned to contribute voluntarily their quota to the development of human and people's rights.

I would, first of all, wish to express my appreciation for this opportunity given to us on this auspicious occasion.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

In an attempt to situate moments when I was requested to perform this task, I recalled that it was at the 42nd Ordinary Session of the ACHPR in Brazaville that Commissioners Maiga and Yeung joined for their first session together with Hon. Commissioners Catherine Dupe Atoki and Zainabo Sylvie Kayetesi who later on rose to Chair the ACHPR. Those were the days, ACHPR was under the Chairmanship of Hon. Sanji Monageng, when Civil society organisations have continued advocating for the presence of more a gender balanced Commission. If I am not mistaken, that session saw the transformation of the African Commission from an all male to a more balanced group of personalities. In those days, Commissioners were only mandate holders of mechanisms.

Today, we are witnesses to the fact that in addition to the performing of their responsibilities as Commissioners, they are in addition mandate holders as well as members of Working Groups/Committees and or Study Groups.

As we stand today, these outgoing Commissioners have served in not less than three other mandates simultaneously. In spite of the increasing work loads, these bright stars have delivered on their tasks, with their high level of professionalism that distinguished each of them in their various assignments. To be honest, they have carried out with such grace and flair that made their achievement seem so seamless. But alas! we all know better the intricacies that accompany every little act, every decision and every word.

The reputation of these Commissioners prior to joining Africa's premier human rights institution are well known and the impact they have each achieved in their own right is evident.

Their positive attitude and spirit of willingness to establish and maintain an exclusive environment which embraces all stakeholders epitomizes their impartiality, and the significance attached to the responsibility to carry out their roles and the due diligence applied to their mandates.

As NGOs we have accompanied them since their nominations and appointments to the ACHPR and have followed their journeys throughout the last 12 (Maiga and Yeung), 9 (Asuagbor) and 6 (Mute) years respectively. Their collective contribution have indeed enriched the jurisprudence and distinguished the work of the Commission.

It has been a privilege and an honour to work with each of these Commissioners who have at all times demonstrated a high level of personal integrity, impartiality and humility. They are role models, visionary leaders and extraordinary mentors.

Under Chairman Maiga's guidance, the ACHPR has made great strides, enriched by her unique style of interaction, leadership, her trademark elegance, her wise, erudite and judicious responses during sessions and humble demeanor are values we shall cherish.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to echo the quote *"People are not what they say but what they do; so judge them not from their words but from their actions"*

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, you will agree that these 4 Commissioners have indeed done more than they have said and their actions speak for them. They have stood like giants leaving their footprints in the sands of the times of ACHPR.

On behalf of the Civil Society Organisations, Non Governmental Organisations I would like to express our appreciation for your hard work, your contributions, your personal integrity, your resilience, your guidance and friendship.

In conclusion, I have been requested to recommend that a platform of outgoing Commissioners be established to ensure that the developed capacity and expertise is not lost and be put at the disposal of Africans to further enhance the promotion and protection of human rights on the continent. Furthermore, we would like to appeal to the African Union to consider a retirement or gratuity package for outgoing Commissioners of the ACHPR who have spent considerably number of years of their lives working voluntarily for

human rights on the continent braving all obstacles and ensuring the implementation of regional and indeed international human rights instruments at all levels.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Finally, I borrow the words of William Shakespeare in 'Julius Caesar' when he said

"Forever, and forever, farewell If we do meet again, why, we shall smile: if not, why then this parting was well made" (Julius Caesar)

Fare thee well to each and every one of you, Honourable Commissioners. May God, who ever you perceive Him to be, continue to use you to impact the lives of others and may He bless you with His Peace wherever you go, regardless of your next address of engagement.

I thank you for your kind attention.

HJF
ACDHRS
27/04/2019

ANNEX: PROFILES OF OUTGOING COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Soyata Maiga

1. Commissioner Soyata Maiga was appointed as Commissioner in 2007.
2. She is a national of Mali.
3. The African Commission's Chairperson and Head of ACHPR Bureau
4. Chairperson of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of People Living with HIV (PLHIV) and those at Risk, Vulnerable to and Affected by HIV
5. Chairperson of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities in Africa
6. Member, Working Group on Specific Issues Related to the work of the African Commission
7. Member, Advisory Committee on Budgetary and Staff Matters
8. Special Rapporteur on the Rights of women in Africa

Commissioner Yeung Kam John Yeung Sik Yuen

1. Commissioner Yeung Kam John Yeung Sik Yuen was appointed as Commissioner in 2007.
2. He is a national of Mauritius.
3. Chairperson of the Working Group on the Rights of Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities in Africa.
4. Member, Working Group on Communications
5. Member, Working Group on Extractive Industries, Environment and Human Rights Violations
6. Member, Working Group on Rights of Older Persons and People with Disabilities

Commissioner Lucy Asuagbor

1. Commissioner Lucy Asuagbor was appointed in 2010.
2. She is a national of Cameroon.
3. Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women
4. Chairperson of the Working Group on Communications.
5. Member, Committee on the Protection of the Rights of People Living With HIV (PLHIV) and Those at Risk, Vulnerable to and Affected by HIV
6. Special Rapporteur, Human Rights Defenders

Commissioner Lawrence Murugu Mute

1. Commissioner Lawrence Murugu Mute was appointed as Commissioner in 2012
2. He is a national of Kenya.
3. He is the Vice-Chairperson of the Commission.
4. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information.
5. Member, Working Group on Specific Issues Related to the work of the African Commission.
6. Chairperson, Committee for the Prevention of Torture in Africa.
7. Member, Working Group on Rights of Older Persons and People with Disabilities.
8. Member, Working Group on Communications.
9. Member, Working Group on Specific Issues Related to the work of the Commission.