



ACDHRS



ACHPR

PARTICIPATION OF NGOs IN THE 69TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS

10-12 NOVEMBER, 2021

ZOOM WEBINAR

CONCEPT NOTE

40 YEARS OF THE AFRICAN CHARTER ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS – THE WAY FORWARD FOR THE AFRICA WE WANT

Introduction

The African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS) in collaboration with partners will organize the Forum on the Participation of NGOs (also known as the NGOs Forum) in the 69th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR).

The NGOs Forum fosters closer collaboration and co-operation among and between NGOs, and with the African Commission for promotion and protection human rights in Africa; provide a discussion platform for organizations working on democracy and human rights issues in the continent; promote inter and sub-regional as well as organizational networking amongst others.

The last NGOs Forum was held virtually (Zoom webinar) from 10-11 April, 2021 prior to the 68th Ordinary Session of the African Commission which was also held virtually. The Forum was a resounding success with over 140 participants from civil society organizations and NGOs in Africa and beyond. At the end of the Forum, Recommendations and Resolutions were forwarded to the African Commission for its consideration during its 68th Ordinary Session.

40 anniversary of the adoption of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights

The founding and premier treaty of the African human system is the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Charter). Convinced that it was the inalienable right of all people to control their own destiny and further conscious of the fact that freedom, equality, justice and dignity were essential objectives for the achievement of the legitimate aspirations of the African peoples, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the then Organization of African Unity (OAU – now African Union) in Nairobi, Kenya on 27th June, 1981 adopted the African Charter.

Also known as the Banjul Charter, the African Charter entered into force on 21st October, 1986. To date, with the exception of Royal Kingdom of Morocco, the African Charter has been ratified by the rest of the 54 Member States of the African Union.

Consequently, the year 2021 marks the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the African Charter which also established by Article 30, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in 1987 to ensure implementation of the provisions of the African Charter by Members States. The adoption of the African Charter and the subsequent establishment of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights were welcomed as landmark developments crucial for the promotion and protection of human rights in the continent.

Since its adoption in 1981 and with the establishment of the African Commission in 1987, significant progress has been registered in the promotion and protection of human rights. In addition, several Additional Protocols have been adopted, including but not limited to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (also known as Maputo Protocol), Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Court).

However, despite registered achievement and progress in some quarters, the continent continues to witness many forms of human violations on a daily basis. With the emergence of Covid19 in December, 2019, the situation of human rights situation in Africa has taken or continues to take a downward trend in some States as measures taken by States for the curtailment of the spread of the virus leads to more rights violations.

Objective:

The main objective of the NGOs Forum is to provide a platform for African civil society or NGOs to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the African Charter and evaluate its implementation over the years highlighting successes and challenges.

The Forum will also provide an opportunity to identify recommendations for the continued implementation of the provisions of the Charter which will contribute towards transforming **the Africa we want** as in the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Methodology and Content

The Forum will cover three (3) main thematic areas namely:

Theme I: Focal Points Reports on the Status of Human Rights and Democracy in Africa: The sub-regional focal points will submit their reports on the situation of human rights and democracy in Africa focusing on countries (Benin, Eswatini, Kenya, Namibia, Seychelles) whose State Reports will be examined during the 69th Ordinary Session of the African Commission. Ensuing discussions will conclude with recommendations on the continued implementation of the Provisions of the African Charter.

Theme II: Special Interest Groups: Participants will be divided into three (3) working groups, each group will evaluate the impact and implementation of the African Charter since its adoption, their engagement in the implementation of the African Charter (identifying registered successes, challenges and recommendations on the way forward.)

Theme III: Networking for Human Rights: This session will focus on the engagement and cooperation among and between regional networks with a view of enhancing such cooperation for the promotion and protection of human rights in Africa. A panel discussion will also be organized on engagement with the African human rights system and mechanisms. The Lusophone Human Rights Defenders Network will also be launched during the event.

Proposed resolutions and recommendations will be presented in plenary for adoption and subsequently forwarded to the African Commission as the contribution of the NGOs Forum to the work of the 69th Ordinary Session of the African Commission.

Language

The deliberations of the Forum will be conducted in Arabic, English, French and Portuguese with simultaneous interpretation facilities.

Venue and Duration

The three-day Forum would be held virtually in the form of a Zoom webinar from 10-12 November, 2021 (daily from 9am-1pm GMT).

Expected Outcomes

- Update on the situation of democracy and human rights in Africa (particularly in Benin, Kenya, Eswatini, Namibia and Seychelles). The said State reports will be examined during the 69th Ordinary Session
- Launching of the Lusophone Human Rights Defenders Network
- Increased knowledge on the African human rights system and mechanisms (particularly the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights)
- Enhanced engagement with the regional human rights systems and mechanisms, learning, sharing and networking opportunity
- Presentation of NGOs Statement during the opening of the 69th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
- Report of the NGOs Forum (highlighting achievements registered since the adoption of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, challenges and the way forward)
- Adoption of recommendations and resolutions to be forwarded to the African Commission for its consideration during the 69th Ordinary Session