

ACHPR PRESS RELEASE ON WORLD AIDS DAY - 1 DECEMBER 2024

On this occasion of the World AIDS Day (1 December 2024), the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (the Commission/ACHPR), joins the rest of the world in commemorating this day. As the 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 (the Committee), I wish to reiterate our commitment in the fight against HIV/AIDS, which is a major health concern in the continent and requires our continued awareness creation and solidarity in support of those living with HIV, those at risk and those affected by the pandemic and to remember those that have passed on due to HIV/AIDS complications.

The theme of the Year 2024 World AIDS Day is "take the rights path: my health, my right" which highlights the significance of human rights promotion and protection approach in addressing issues of discrimination, stigma, prejudice and limitations/inequalities in prevention, testing, accessing treatment and health services by people living with HIV/AIDS and those at risk. In order to achieve the 95-95-95 UNAIDS targets to end the AIDS pandemic, namely: 95% of people living with HIV know their HIV status; 95% of people who know their status are receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART) and that 95% of people receiving ART have suppressed viral loads (VLS) by 2030, we all have to work very hard. On this occasion, the Committee commends African countries that have made remarkable progress towards the attainment of those targets, and call upon others to be inspired in that struggle.

The relevance and appropriateness of the theme of the 2024 World AIDS Day cannot be emphasized enough as Africa strives towards the attainment of "The Africa We Want" through the AU Agenda 2063, and towards the attainment of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In order to attain Agenda 2063 and the SDGs, it is necessary to highlight and address the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS as we strive to ensure accessible quality health services to mitigate its impact, through a human rights approach.

The African Charter guarantees the right to equality, through Article 3, which states that every individual shall be equal before the law, and that every individual shall be entitled to equal protection of the law. The right to health is also guaranteed by the African Charter through Article 16 which states that every individual shall have the right to enjoy the best attainable state of physical and mental health, and requires States Parties to the African Charter to take necessary measures to protect the health of their people and to ensure that they receive medical attention when they are sick.

In that light the Committee calls upon the States Parties to the African Charter to fulfill their obligation to address discrimination and to ensure accessibility of quality health services by everyone, including key populations, as the African Charter and other regional and international human rights legal instruments require.

The Committee would like to underscore the progress that would be achieved in the fight against HIV/AIDS, if all the States adopted appropriate measures that are well-funded. Furthermore, legislative, institutional and policy measures to promote and protect the right to health and the right to equality, amongst other rights, would go along to ensure access to quality health services in HIV prevention, testing and treatment services and support without discrimination.

On this occasion, the Committee recalls the ACHPR Resolution on the HIV/AIDS Pandemic - Threat Against Human Rights and Humanity - ACHPR/Res.53(XXIX)01 adopted on 7 May 2001 in Tripoli, Libya in which "the Commission *declared* that the HIV/AIDS pandemic is a human rights issue which is a threat against humanity; *called* upon African Governments, State Parties to the Charter to allocate national resources that reflect a determination to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS, ensure human rights protection of those living with HIV/AIDS against discrimination, provide support to families for the care of those dying of AIDS, devise public health care programmes of education and carry out public awareness especially in view of free and voluntary HIV testing, as well as appropriate medical interventions; and *called* upon the international pharmaceutical industries to make affordable and comprehensive health care available to African governments for urgent action against HIV/AIDS while inviting international aid agencies to provide a wide range of programmes for Africa including funding of research and development projects."

In conclusion, the Committee calls upon all stakeholders to renew their effort in the fight against HIV/AIDS and celebrates the achievements of States Parties to the African Charter that have achieved tremendous progress in promulgating effective laws, strategies and other initiatives in the fight against HIV/AIDS, particularly in prevention of new infections and support to those living with and affected by HIV. Their commendable results due to political and financial will should serve as an encouragement for them to continue with the same effort, as we strive towards achieving an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa.

Honorable Commissioner Dr. Litha Musyimi-Ogana

Chairperson of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of People Living with HIV and those at Risk, Vulnerable to and Affected by HIV

African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)

Banjul, The Republic of The Gambia