

AFRICAN UNION

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**UNION
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**AFRICAN COURT ON HUMAN AND PEOPLE'S RIGHTS
COUR AFRICAINE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME ET DES PEUPLES
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**68^{EME} ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON
HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS**

OPENING CEREMONY

14 APRIL 2021

**MESSAGE FROM THE HONOURABLE JUDGE SYLVAIN ORE
PRESIDENT OF THE AFRICAN COURT ON HUMAN AND
PEOPLES' RIGHTS**

Your Excellency the Chairperson of the African Union Commission,

Honourable Commissioner Solomon Ayele Derso, Chairperson of the
African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

Your Excellency Mamadou Tangara, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Gambia,

Representative of the Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child,

Honourable Commissioners, members of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights,

Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

High Representative of the European Union Commission on Human Rights

Representative of the Network of National Human Rights Institutions,

Representative of the Non-Governmental Organisations Forum,

Ladies and Gentlemen, participants in this ceremony, in your respective ranks and grades,

1. As the 68th and first session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights of the year 2021 opens, I would like first of all to congratulate the Commission and especially its Chairperson for the immense work done in 2020 despite the many constraints that were unfortunately imposed on us by the health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Indeed, no one could have imagined the magnitude of this health crisis and its negative impact on the implementation of our programmes and projects. With insight and determination, however, you have been able to develop solutions and adopt new working methods that have enabled you to hold your sessions regularly, to examine pending cases, thereby meeting the needs of thousands of African citizens who legitimately expected their rights and freedoms to be protected and promoted.

3. While we are hoping for better days, it is clear that the whole of humanity is not yet out of the crisis and the social malaise and anxiety about the future of human rights on our continent are growing by the day. In such an almost deleterious context, if I may say so, inter-institutional collaboration, dialogue and the exchange of experiences are all means that will enable us to better leverage our resources to achieve better results. The Court, for its part, reaffirms its full readiness to strengthen its cooperation with the other organs of the African Union with a human rights mandate, as well as with all persons of goodwill who are keen to ensure better protection of human rights in Africa. Indeed, the many challenges in the field of human rights leave us no choice but to strengthen our actions individually and collectively.

4. The African Court, for its part, will seize the opportunity of its fifteenth anniversary this year and the adoption of its third strategic plan 2021-2025 to embark on a vast programme aimed at consolidating its action. This programme will involve strengthening cooperation with all human rights stakeholders, developing a judicial policy, consolidating its judicial work,

and boosting the confidence of Member States in the Court's decisions with a view to increasing their rate of compliance.

5. As I said in my address at your 67th Ordinary Session last year from this very rostrum, the Court and the Commission have a duty to work together for the same cause, that of respect for and promotion of human and peoples' rights in Africa. To achieve this objective, we must do everything possible, despite our differences, to consolidate and energise the complementary relationship between the Court and the Commission, in accordance with the provisions of the Protocol Establishing the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. This constantly repeated call for complementarity is very important. It reflects the expectations of thousands of citizens who wish to seize the opportunity offered to them by the provisions of the Protocol to bring cases before the Court against States that have not deposited a declaration accepting the Court's jurisdiction to receive applications directly from individuals and NGOs.

6. In a month or so, the African Court will welcome new judges and the president of the Court will certainly be a judge other than myself. However, I would like once again, on behalf of all my fellow judges and on my own behalf, to express our support for the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and hope that the bonds of brotherhood that have always existed between our two bodies will grow further, especially with the new team.

7. It is therefore in this spirit of calling for continued solidarity that I would like to end the Court's goodwill message by wishing the 68th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights every success in its work.

I thank you all.