



**CLOSING STATEMENT BY
H.E. MR. MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**TO BE DELIVERED BY
H.E. AMB. BANKOLE ADEOYE
AU COMMISSIONER FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS, PEACE AND
SECURITY**

**AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE 68TH ORDINARY SESSION OF
THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS
(ACHPR)**

04 MAY 2021

(VIRTUALLY)

Honourable Commissioner Solomon Dersso, Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR);

Excellencies, Ministers of State Parties to the African Charter;

Honourable Heads and Representatives of Organs of the African Union;

Honourable Vice Chairperson and Commissioners of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights;

Excellencies, Heads of Delegation and Delegates of State Parties to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights;

Excellencies, Ambassadors and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Representatives of African National Human Rights Institutions;

Representatives of UN Agencies;

Representatives of Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations;

Colleagues from the African Union Commission;

Staff of the African Union institutions with a mandate on Human and Peoples' Rights;

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I feel greatly honoured and privileged to address this august assembly on behalf of H.E., Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, at this Closing Ceremony of the 68th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, taking place virtually in fulfillment of the new provisions in the Rules of Procedure of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. Despite all the challenges faced by the COVID-19 Pandemic on the continent, particularly by the Human Rights stakeholders, I am pleased that the Session has so far been a success.

I wish to begin by congratulating Honourable Commissioner Dr. Solomon Dersso, the Chairperson of the Commission, together with all Honourable Commissioners of this Commission for the diligent manner in which the Ordinary Session was organized. I also would like to recognize and thank members of the Secretariat of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights for their hard work and for being the catalyst for the effectiveness of the Commission.

Keeping the tradition of organizing the Ordinary Sessions of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, in spite of all challenges, is a clear demonstration of commitment to the human rights decisions reached and agreed by our founding fathers, towards the significant assertion of Africa advancing its own Instrument, which will promote and protect the continent's human and peoples' rights. Indeed, the inclusion of the rights of people was a very significant innovation, taking into account our past struggles as Africans to safeguard the collective integrity of our nations and our continent from the yoke of colonialism, exploitation and apartheid.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

On 3rd May 2021, the African Union (AU) joined the international community to celebrate the World Press Freedom Day 2021 under the theme "***Information as a Public Good***" in Windhoek, Namibia, where the historic 1991 Windhoek Declaration for the Development of a Free, Independent and Pluralistic Press was drafted and adopted.

That same day, the AU reiterated its continued commitment to promote and protect freedom of expression and the right of access to information in the digital age. This solemn commitment is underlined by the AU Theme of the year 2021, **Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for building the Africa We Want**, and it is in this context that the African Union Commission is dedicated to working closely with its Member States, the UN System and the wider African Civil Society Organizations, in pursuing relevant AU decisions and declarations that advance the promotion of safety of journalists, together with promoting Information as a Public Good.

Though, this commemoration is taking place in a difficult context as we are faced and challenged by the COVID-19 Pandemic, it is instructive to note, that the World Press Freedom Day is a reminder to all governments of the world to respect their commitment to press freedom and to pledge more efforts to advance the promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights. As such, this year's commemoration is an opportunity for all Members of the International Community to reaffirm the importance of cherishing information as a public good, and exploring what could be done to strengthen journalism, as well as, to advance transparency and empowerment while leaving no one behind.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Time has come for the Africa to resolutely overcome decades of numerous human rights challenges resulting from a diverse range of factors, including,

among others, war, poverty, corruption, autocratic rules and exclusion of minorities from all spheres of life. It is the right time for all our Member States to recommit themselves, individually and collectively, and resolve to promote and safeguard freedoms, rights, justice, equality and human dignity in Africa by putting into practice all the instruments and mechanisms of the African Shared Values.

It is also important that our Member States fully support and cooperate with all AU Organs and Institutions to ensure that human and peoples' rights are fully promoted and protected on our continent, as we make concerted efforts towards effective implementation of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. In this regard, Member States are urged to fully implement decisions and recommendations that emanated from this 68 Ordinary Session thereby upholding the values and tenets enshrined in the AU Constitutive Act and other AU human rights Instruments and Standards adopted by our Policy Organs.

Beyond pursuing our noble agenda for greater enjoyment of civil rights and political liberties, we have to redouble our efforts to ensure that the African people enjoy the right to food, the right to safe water and sanitation, the right to housing, the right to education, the right to health as we battle COVID19 pandemic which are all a part of the right to development. These are the basic rights that are required for a decent standard of living even before we can think of the right to vote.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

As I conclude, let me take this platform, to pay tribute to all journalists in Africa and the World over, who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession. I therefore, call on all AU Member States to condemn violence against journalists and to take action to improve their safety, with particular attention to women journalists.

Finally, I wish to thank the Chairperson, Honourable Commissioners and Members of the Secretariat of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights for their hard work and commitment, while i extend my gratitude to all delegates and participants for making time off their busy schedules to attend this historic Ordinary Session taking place during this extra-ordinary time of COVID-19 Pandemic.

On behalf of H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, It is my singular honour, to declare this 68th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights OFFICIALLY CLOSED.

I thank you all for your kind attention.