

**General Statement on Human Rights in Africa by Nord-Sud XXI to the African
Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to its 56th Ordinary Session, Banjul, Gambia,
21 April to 7 May 2015**

Esteemed Commissioners, respected State representative and civil society colleagues,

We wish to highlight the vital importance of climate change to the human rights in Africa. The danger that climate change poses to the human rights of Africans cannot be overemphasized. It is perhaps the greatest challenge to the protection of human rights on the continent this century. As Sudanese Ambassador and the Group of 77 Coordinator told the Global Climate Summit in December 2010, the failure to take adequate international action on climate change will lead to the death of one hundred million Africans in sub-Saharan Africa alone. Despite this stark warning no adequate international action has been taken. **We urge the Commission to adopt a resolution on human rights and climate change in Africa based on the NGO Forum resolution.**

As this Commission and its African Charter Member States are meeting here in Banjul, you African colleagues are meeting in Geneva to draft a Declaration on the Right to Peace. While most of the African countries support a strong declaration, their views have been largely ignored by the Costa Rican Chairperson of the drafting Working Group to such an extent that as we speak the draft text of the declaration does not even include the right to peace or even peoples' right to peace which was already agreed in the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Peace in 1984. **In light of the unambiguous right to peace in article 23 of the Charter we urge the Commission to consider, perhaps through a Chair's statement, sending a strong message of support to the Working Group urging them to agree on a draft Declaration text that unambiguously includes the right to peace, a right which is vital to all African countries.**

Recently, on 17 April, discussions took place at the UN in Geneva on food security in the context of the Doha trade rounds. At stake was a call for adequate policy space for States to ensure the food security of their most vulnerable people. States members of the Western European Group and Others at the UN were intransigent in their calls for opening markets to be given priority over the right to food. **We urge the Commission, perhaps through its Working Group on Social and Economic Rights and by reference to articles 15, 16, and 19 to 22 of its Charter, to assure African States that the right to food must take priority over the opening of markets.** The two ends are not always incompatible, but it should be made clear which is a priority. We remain at the Commission's disposal to provide more details on this process which we mention very briefly in our general statement on human rights in Africa.

Finally, we draw the Commission's attention to the Sustainable Development Goals that are being finalized at the UN in New York as this Commission meets and will be adopted by the heads of Governments and States, including all African leaders, in September of this year before the Commission's next Ordinary Session. We express our concern about the apparent prioritizing

of private partnerships, including those based on natural resource extracting industries and industries with a significant impact on food security such as seed production and distribution. While we recognize the valuable contribution that private sector can make to ensuring the right to development that is enshrined in article 24, 21 and 22 of the Charter, we hope that the Commission will stress the importance of State responsibilities in ensuring the right to development. Furthermore, we recognize that one of the main goals of the SDGs is to address the social and economic disparities between States. In this regards, we wish to recognize the vital importance of cooperation and of the extra-territorial obligations of non-African States with ability to do so to provide financing, capacity building and access to technology to ensure African States can adequately ensure the human rights, especially the right to development of their people. **We urge the Commission and the Charter's Member States to emphasize these human rights driven issues in any action it takes in relation to the SDGs or Post-2015 development agenda process.**

Madam Chairperson, I hope this will be the last time I address you on behalf of Nord-Sud XXI, an organization on whose Executive Bureau I remain, but **I hope that at this 56th Ordinary Session the Commission will admit International-Lawyers.Org to observer status** and that our respect for and cooperation with the Commission and its work can in the future be expressed through this new non-government organization.