

STATEMENT BY NGO
THE AFRICAN UNION OF THE BLIND, (AFUB) – NO. 447
THE 56TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND
PEOPLES' RIGHTS
BANJUL, THE GAMBIA
21TH APRIL 2015

HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN AFRICA

Whereas the African Union of the Blind (AFUB), in collaboration with the disability community in Africa, appreciates the work of the Commission;

Acknowledging that the Charter and a range of African human rights mechanisms promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities on the continent, of whom blind and partially sighted persons are part;

Noting that we shoulder the mandate of 60 National Member Organisations of/for blind and partially sighted persons in 53 Member States of the African Union;

Aware that the Commission is in the process of coming up with an African Disability Protocol;

Desirous of drawing the attention of the Commission to the fact that persons with disabilities, particularly blind and partially sighted children, youth, women and men continue to experience discrimination, abuse, exclusion and non-enjoyment of social, cultural, political, economic and legal rights in Africa;

Noting that children with disabilities, particularly blind and partially sighted children, are still not having access to education due to a myriad of challenges;

Regret that each year the world publishing industry produces about 1 million new titles, of which less than 1%, are ever produced in accessible formats which can be independently read by visually impaired and other print disabled readers;

Concerned that National development plans and resource allocation seldom recognize persons with disabilities, including blind and partially sighted persons currently standing at about 25 million Africans;

Apprehensive that review and implementation of national laws that create an enabling environment and advance the status of disabled persons are still an illusion in most of Africa;

Highlighting the fact that only 1 African State has ratified the Marrakesh Treaty, despite its overwhelming adoption by the continent;

Now therefore, do hereby present to the Commission the following:

1. The African Commission should embrace a consultative and expedient process towards developing an African Disability Human Rights Mechanism – including the Disability Protocol, to defend the rights of Persons with Disabilities, including those who are blind or partially sighted. Such a process should be inclusive of civil society organisations, AU Organs

like the Regional Economic Commissions, Parliaments and National Human Rights Institutions.

2. To promote, protect and defend the rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa, we urge the Commission to call upon all the ratified states to domesticate and monitor the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and encourage the NGOs to support the CRPD shadow reporting processes in Africa.
3. We appeal to the Commission to impress upon all Member States to develop/review inclusive education policies so that learners with disabilities can access quality education. This also calls for appropriate planning, as well as allocation and release of required resources.
4. We again appeal to the Commission to impress upon all Member States to speedily ratify the Marrakesh treaty so that blind and partially sighted persons and other print disabilities can have access to published books.
5. We ask the Commission to encourage the member states to amend or enact national copyright law to include appropriate limitations and exceptions in line with the Treaty; prepare an action plan to implement the Treaty, working with blind people's and other disability organizations and other relevant stakeholders such as libraries; where possible, the state should provide financial resources to authorized entities and other statutory institutions to help implement the provisions of the Treaty.
6. The situation of blind and partially sighted Persons in conflict and post-conflict countries in Africa calls for attention; and we implore the Commission and the Special Reporters in their fact-finding missions to report on the status of such persons and other persons with disabilities.
7. The African Commission and all other organs of the African Union should prioritise disability programming within their core business, allocate appropriate resources to such programmes and establish disability friendly work environment that is accessible for people with disabilities in terms of Sign Language, accessible text formats and infrastructure.
8. We call on the ACHPR to institute a study on the right to accessibility and reasonable accommodation for persons with disability in Africa.