



**STATEMENT OF THE NETWORK OF AFRICAN NATIONAL
HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS DURING THE 79th ORDINARY
SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND
PEOPLES' RIGHTS**

**By Adv. Joseph Whittal, Chairperson, The Network of African National Human Rights
Institutions (NANHRI).**

14th May, 2024

The Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights; Honourable Remy Ngoy Lumbu;

Distinguished Representatives of AU Member States;

Honourable Members of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights; Representatives of the African National Human Rights Institutions;

Representatives of CSOs, NGOs and other actors;

Distinguished Guests;

All Protocol observed

As we convene for the 79th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, it is with a profound sense of duty and urgency that I would like to congratulate the Commission for the strides it has made so far in the realm of promotion and protection of human rights on the continent. Our collective commitment to upholding and advancing human rights remains paramount, particularly in light of the numerous challenges confronting our societies.

Excellencies and Honourable Delegates,

Within the framework of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, we acknowledge the crucial role of education in shaping the future of our continent. Agenda 2063 guarantees inclusive and equitable quality education, fostering lifelong learning opportunities for all African citizens. Education stands as a fundamental pillar for sustainable development, empowering individuals, eradicating poverty, and fostering inclusive societies. It serves as a catalyst for innovation, driving economic growth and social progress across diverse sectors. By nurturing critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills, education equips individuals with the tools they need to thrive in an ever-evolving global landscape.

Reflecting on this year's theme, "Educate an African fit for the 21st Century: Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant

learning in Africa," underscores the imperative of prioritizing education for sustainable development and social progress. Education stands as the cornerstone of progress in the 21st century, equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to navigate an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

Excellencies and Honourable Delegates,

As we navigate the complexities of the 21st century, investing in education becomes not just a necessity but a strategic imperative for unlocking the full potential of our people and continent. With education as our compass, we chart a course towards a future where every individual has the opportunity to thrive, contribute meaningfully, and participate fully in sustainable development across Africa.

The African education sector continues to face serious challenges of low and inequitable access to education, irrelevant curriculum and poor learning outcomes, inadequate political commitment and financing, weak education system capacity, and weak link with the world of work. The reality of high illiteracy rates in Africa poses significant challenges to our collective progress. These rates perpetuate cycles of poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment, hindering economic growth, social cohesion, and political stability.

According to UNESCO, sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rates of education exclusion. Over one-fifth of children between the ages of about 6 and 11 are out of school, followed by one-third of youth between the ages of about 12 and 14. According to UIS data, almost 60% of youth between the ages of about 15 and 17 are not in school. Without urgent action, the situation will likely get worse as the region faces a rising demand for education due to a still-growing school-age population.

On the same breath, research has shown that the average technological capability in African states has almost doubled, increasing from 25% to 41% which is linked to increasing internet penetration and rapid diffusion of digital technologies across the countries. However, we reckon that most states are yet to fully take advantage of this unfolding potential to address the inherent inequalities in access to quality education by all.

Excellencies and Honourable Delegates,

Conflicts disrupt learning environments and divert precious resources, impeding educational progress. Urgent action is required to promote peaceful societies and address conflicts, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to learn and grow in a safe environment. Moreover, the impact of climate change poses another significant obstacle to education. Many countries in sub-Saharan Africa are still grappling with the havoc caused by climate-related disasters that have in turn caused school closures and the destruction of livelihoods, all of which profoundly affect education. To address climate change, investments in building resilience and adaptation are key. Going forward, it is imperative to implement strategies that mitigate the effects of climate change on education infrastructure and ensure continuity in learning despite environmental challenges.

Our reflections would be a miss, if we did not talk about the rampant wave of untamed corruption that continues to gnaw on our already ailing economies. Each, Africa loses close to \$140 billion in corruption. This coupled with illicit financial flows amounting to about \$60 billion a year, continue to deny the continent of the much-needed resources that could otherwise be invested in social sectors to turn things around. We thus call on member states to prioritize tackling corruption, and seal the Illicit financial flow loopholes that allow seepage of Africa's resources.

Excellencies and Honourable Delegates,

As National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), we uphold the Paris Principles and play pivotal roles in advancing education as a fundamental human right. Our contributions span from monitoring compliance with international standards to advocating for policy reforms that ensure equitable access to quality education for all segments of society. By promoting inclusive education policies, conducting research on educational disparities, and engaging with stakeholders at all levels, NHRIs strive to create an environment where education is accessible, inclusive, and transformative for individuals and communities across Africa.

Excellencies and Honourable Delegates,

Inclusive education, integral to Agenda 2063, ensures that no one is left behind in the pursuit of knowledge and skills necessary for personal growth and collective advancement. By embracing diversity, fostering tolerance, and accommodating the needs of marginalized

groups, inclusive education becomes a powerful tool for achieving the aspirations of Agenda 2063. It enables individuals from all backgrounds to access quality education and participate fully in the socio-economic development of their societies, promoting social cohesion and unity.

Investing in education therefore, is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic imperative for building resilient, inclusive, and peaceful societies essential for sustainable development in Africa. By prioritizing education within the framework of Agenda 2063, we can build a continent where every individual has the opportunity to thrive, contribute, and shape a brighter future for generations to come.

Finally,

In conclusion, education stands as a fundamental human right and a powerful tool for advancing human rights and promoting sustainable development in Africa. As we strive to "Educate and Skill Africa for the 21st Century," let us prioritize our commitment to ensuring universal access to quality education for all individuals across the continent. By investing in education, we invest in the future of Africa and lay the foundation for a more just, equal, and rights-respecting society.