



**STATEMENT OF THE NETWORK OF AFRICAN NATIONAL  
HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS DURING THE 81<sup>ST</sup> ORDINARY  
SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND  
PEOPLES' RIGHTS**

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

**17th October, 2024**

*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 Pan-African Parliament*

*Representatives of African National Human Rights Institutions;*

*Representatives of Civil Society Organizations, NGOs, and other Stakeholders;*

*Distinguished Guests;*

*All Protocols Observed,*

On behalf of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI), I wish to express my sincere gratitude for the opportunity to address the 81st Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Commission). It is always an honor to contribute to these deliberations dedicated to safeguarding human rights across the African continent.

**Excellencies and Honourable Delegates,**

The African Commission has made remarkable strides in promoting human rights across the continent. Its efforts in establishing essential frameworks and mechanisms serve as cornerstones for human rights protection on the continent. The convening of the 1st Joint Forum of Special Mechanisms is a testament to the African Commission's commitment to fostering dialogue and cooperation between different stakeholders on the continent. We also congratulate the African Commission on the second edition of the inter-mechanism dialogue between the African Commission and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights held in Washington DC in July of this year. Through these collaborative initiatives, the African Commission has reaffirmed its commitment to protecting human rights issues on the continent while demonstrating its capacity to share best practices with relevant stakeholders regionally and globally. As NANHRI, we express our solidarity with the African Commission in protecting human rights on the continent and in supporting the institutional

collaborations of the African Commission, geared towards strengthening the capacity of the African Commission in the promotion and protection of human rights.

### **Excellencies and Honourable Delegates,**

In the context of regional development, it is crucial to underscore the intersection between human rights and economic growth. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) holds significant potential for Africa's economic development. However, it currently lacks a strong human rights dimension. Human rights are not separate from development; they are essential to ensuring inclusive, equitable, and sustainable growth.

NANHRI advocates for the integration of human rights standards into the AfCFTA framework. We also encourage the African Commission to continue its collaboration with regional bodies and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) to embed human rights considerations into Africa's economic policies and initiatives, thereby aligning with the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 vision of a prosperous, peaceful, and integrated continent.

The integration of human rights into broader development agendas, such as the African Union's Agenda 2063, remains a central priority for NANHRI. We believe that the African Commission's work significantly contributes to the long-term vision of a prosperous, peaceful, and people-centred Africa. By ensuring that human rights are at the core of all developmental processes, we lay the foundation for inclusive and sustainable growth that respects the dignity of all Africans.

Another critical area for collaboration is the promotion of business and human rights. NANHRI has been actively involved in the African Business and Human Rights Forum, which emphasises the role of human rights in shaping the business environment. Businesses can either be enablers or violators of human rights, making it imperative to establish structures that hold them accountable while promoting their positive contributions to Africa's development. The Forum is a positive step in this direction, and we encourage the African Commission to continue supporting this initiative to ensure that human rights principles underpin Africa's economic activities.

### **Excellencies and Honourable Delegates,**

Limited access to justice, especially for marginalised communities, continues to undermine the realisation of human rights on the continent. The African Commission continues to face constraints such as limited financial resources, political interference, and insufficient engagement from some Member States. These challenges, coupled with security concerns in various regions, hinder the effective implementation of the African Commission's mandates. Nevertheless, we must remain resolute in addressing these obstacles through constructive dialogue, advocacy, and regional cooperation, ensuring that human rights become a cornerstone of governance across Africa.

NANHRI also acknowledges the vital role of human rights defenders (HRDs) across the continent. Human rights defenders face increasing threats, including harassment, intimidation, and violence, particularly in regions plagued by corruption and weak governance. NANHRI stands in solidarity with HRDs and urges the African Commission to strengthen protection mechanisms for those on the frontlines of human rights advocacy. Corruption undermines human rights, erodes trust in public institutions, and creates an enabling environment for abuse and exploitation. Combating corruption must be a priority, as it poses one of the greatest threats to achieving the human rights agenda in Africa.

### **Finally,**

As we reflect on the African Commission's achievements and the work that remains, NANHRI reaffirms its commitment to working alongside the African Commission to ensure the realisation of the rights enshrined in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. We must continue to advocate for the protection of human rights defenders, enhance corporate accountability and economic prosperity, and address the root causes of inequality. Together,

we can build a continent where human rights are not just an aspiration but a lived reality for all.

Thank you!