

Panel on Critical Minerals and Artificial Intelligence

81st Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

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Background

In recent years, the advancement of emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), is transforming industries globally. In this context, critical minerals have become indispensable for driving these advancements. Critical minerals are essential components in the production of advanced technologies, including AI hardware such as semiconductors and energy storage systems.

However, while these advancements offer immense potential, they also bring forth vital questions related to human rights, governance, and equitable access to resources. African countries, rich in critical minerals, are navigating complex challenges that include ensuring environmental sustainability, managing the socioeconomic impact of mining activities, and addressing the global geopolitical dynamics that influence demand and supply.

These challenges highlight the growing significance of minerals like lithium, nickel, cobalt, and rare earth elements, which are crucial for renewable energy technologies such as electric vehicles and wind turbines. Successfully addressing these challenges will allow these countries to leverage their mineral wealth for sustainable socioeconomic development.

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), through its resolution 473 on AI and emerging technologies, emphasizes the need for governance frameworks that align technological innovation with human rights. Drawing on the draft study on AI, the ACHPR seeks to explore the ways in which AI and other new technologies impact upon human and peoples' rights. It also seeks to look into the intersection between critical minerals, new tech, and human and peoples' rights.

Objectives of the Panel:

The panel will focus on:

1. Sharing insights from the draft study on the implications of AI and other new and emerging technologies on human and peoples' rights in general and on the mandate of the African Commission in particular;

2. Exploring the significance of critical minerals for new and emerging technologies
3. Identifying the implications of the significance of critical minerals for human and peoples' rights in Africa.
4. Analysing the governance challenges arising from AI, new and emerging tech, and the intersection between critical minerals and new and emerging tech.
5. Explore how the African human rights system can contribute to the advancement of a human rights based governance system that contributes to addressing the human and peoples' rights issues arising from these developments.

Panellists:

- **Professor Thompson Chengeta**, Liverpool John Moores University
- **Ms. Cheryl Akinyi Odhiambo**, Programme Manager, Open Society Initiative Foundation
- **Mr. Zwelithini Xaba, Legal Assistant**, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Moderator: Honourable Commissioner Solomon Ayele Dersso, Focal Point on the ACHPR Study on Human and Peoples' Rights and AI, Robotics, and Emerging Technologies