



ACHPR

African Commission on
Human & Peoples' Rights



ACERWC

African Committee of
Experts on the Rights
and Welfare of the Child

Press Statement on the occasion of the 33rd Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union

The African Commission and the ACERWC call on the AU Assembly to mobilize greater effort for silencing the guns based on human and peoples' rights in Africa and to declare 2021 a year for collective action for addressing the threat of climate crisis in Africa to human and peoples' rights.

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (the African Commission), and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), two of the three African Union's bodies for the promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights and the rights and welfare of the Child, welcome the election of President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa as the African Union (AU) Assembly Chairperson for 2020 and congratulates the outgoing Chair H.E. President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt for its chairship in 2019.

The African Commission and the ACERWC applaud the priorities that President Ramaphosa outlined for South Africa's chairship of the AU.

As Chairpersons of the African Commission and the ACERWC, we salute many of the priorities of South Africa's Chairship.

As a continent in which the majority of the peoples, women, men and children languish in poverty, the efforts for the structural transformation of the economies of the continent through supporting integration, economic development and trade and investment in the continent is an imperative that should be put first and foremost at the noble service of uplifting the standard of living of the peoples of the continent.

Similarly, the focus on championing infrastructural development, which also creates opportunities for employment, if implemented with due regard to human and peoples' rights standards, will create the conditions for meeting the development aspirations and needs of our peoples.

The foregoing priority areas are in line with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which, in its preamble, expresses the reaffirmation by African States of their pledge 'to coordinate and intensify their cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for peoples of Africa'.

We note that two of the most formidable challenges on our continent facing our effort to promote and protect human and peoples' rights in general and the rights and welfare of the child in particular are violent conflicts and the disastrous incidents of weather events resulting from the global climate emergency affecting most of the continent.

Violent conflicts, whose frequency, geographic scope and lethality increased in 2019, have led to the most serious of violations of human and peoples' rights in Africa including mass murder, mutilations, sexual violence particularly against women, and destruction of property and livelihoods, and displacement of millions of peoples in which children are most affected, with indelible marks left on their lives; girls in particular face increased threats of trafficking, exploitation, and sexual and gender-based violence; and the provision of basic services, such as education, health and social protection are gravely compromised.

The situation has posed alarming threat to the right of millions of people in Africa to peace and security guaranteed under Article 23 of the African Charter, Articles 10 and 11 of the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, and Articles 5 and 22 of the African Children's Charter.

In the context of the deplorable human and peoples' rights consequences of the spike in incidents of violence and conflicts, we welcome the AU theme of the year on Silencing the Guns to be most fitting, for realizing the right to peace and security, African Commission and the ACERWC look forward to the incoming AU

Chairperson and the AU Assembly mobilizing greater effort and policy action - by the AU Assembly and the Peace and Security Council – for silencing the guns not only in respect to South Sudan and Libya but also other conflict situations on the continent on the basis of human and peoples’ rights and international humanitarian law measures involving prevention and protection, monitoring and reporting, investigation, remedial measures including humanitarian and rehabilitation support, with particular focus on strengthening child protection systems and informal justice systems to effectively prevent girls and boys in conflict situations from being harmed.

We also note that Africa has witnessed with increasing ferocity and frequency the recurrence of destructive weather conditions affecting many parts of the continent leading to deaths, destruction of property and livelihoods and displacement. The situation is creating not only the vulnerabilities of individuals and communities in all affected parts of the continent but also poses the most serious threat to the human and peoples’ rights and survival of the peoples of the continent. As in the case with all crisis, children are in the most vulnerable situation to bear the brunt of the impacts of climate change.

The African Commission and the ACERWC in this regard strongly appeal to the incoming AU Chairperson, President Cyril Ramaphosa and the AU Assembly to declare 2021 the African Union Year on collective action for effective preparedness for addressing the destructive effects of climate change in Africa in accordance with Resolution 417 of the African Commission adopted at its 64th session held in Sharm el Sheikh, Arab Republic of Egypt in May 2019.

Hon. Commissioner Solomon Dersso

*Chairperson of the African Commission
on Human and Peoples’ Rights*

Hon. Joseph Ndayisenga

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