



**Statement by Mr. Issaka Garba Abdou, Head of Governance and  
Human Rights Division**

**Directorate of Governance and Conflict Prevention  
Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security**

**African Union commission**

**On behalf of H.E. Amb. Bankole Adeoye  
Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security**

**Pre-Session Forum of States Parties to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights**

**Preceding the 89<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the ACHPR**

**Date: 10 and 11 October 2026**

**Venue: Dakar, Senegal**

- **Excellence, Monsieur l'ambassadeur Ibrahima Cisse, Représentant du Gouvernement de la République du Sénégal ;**
- **Excellence, Monsieur l'ambassadeur Willy Nyamitwe, Président du COREP;**
- **Excellence Monsieur Idrissa Sow, Président, de la Commission africaine des droits de l'homme et des peuples ; Honorables Commissaires**
- **Excellences, mesdames et messieurs les Représentants des États parties ;**
- **Distingués Représentants du Haut-Commissariat des Nations Unies aux droits de l'homme ;**
- **Mesdames et Messieurs**

C'est pour moi un honneur et un privilège particuliers de prendre la parole devant ce troisième Forum pré-session des États parties à la Charte africaine des droits de l'homme et des peuples, au nom de Son Excellence l'Ambassadeur Bankole Adeoye, Commissaire aux Affaires politiques, à la Paix et à la Sécurité.

Je vous transmets ses salutations chaleureuses ainsi que son appréciation sincère pour votre engagement constant en faveur de la promotion et de la protection des droits de l'homme et des peuples sur notre continent. Je voudrais également exprimer notre profonde gratitude au Gouvernement et au peuple de la République du Sénégal pour leur hospitalité légendaire et leur soutien dans l'organisation de cette importante rencontre.

Nous saluons la Commission africaine des droits de l'homme et des peuples pour avoir institutionnalisé ce Forum en tant que cadre privilégié de dialogue constructif entre les États parties et la Commission. Cette plateforme offre une occasion précieuse d'échanger les expériences, de partager les bonnes pratiques, d'examiner avec franchise les défis rencontrés et d'identifier des solutions concrètes pour renforcer la mise en œuvre de la Charte africaine. Nous remercions également le Sous-comité du COREP sur les Droits de l'Homme, la Démocratie et la Gouvernance pour son soutien constant et son engagement soutenu, qui contribuent à maintenir les droits de l'homme au cœur de l'agenda africain de gouvernance.

### **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This year marks two significant milestones in Africa's human rights journey: forty-five years since the adoption of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and forty years since its entry into force. These anniversaries offer more than an opportunity for celebration; they invite us to reflect on the aspirations that inspired the Charter, assess the progress achieved, and renew our collective determination to realize its promise for future generations.

The Charter emerged from Africa's historic struggles against colonialism, apartheid, racial discrimination, and all forms of oppression. It reflected the shared determination of African peoples to build societies founded on human dignity, freedom, solidarity, justice and equality. When adopted in Nairobi on 27 June 1981 and subsequently entering into force on 21 October 1986, the Charter presented a distinctly African and remarkably forward-looking vision of human rights.

Its enduring strength lies in its holistic approach. It affirmed that civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights, and the collective rights of peoples are mutually reinforcing and indivisible. Long before many global discussions embraced such thinking, the Charter explicitly recognized the rights to development, peace and a satisfactory environment, thereby positioning Africa at the forefront of progressive human rights discourse.

Over the past four decades, that vision has evolved into a robust continental human rights architecture. The establishment of the African Commission in 1987 created a permanent mechanism dedicated to promoting and protecting the rights enshrined in the Charter. The operationalization of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights further strengthened access to justice and accountability. Complementary instruments, including the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Maputo Protocol, and the Kampala Convention, have expanded protections for some of the most vulnerable members of our societies.

These achievements have deepened access to justice and strengthened the normative foundations upon which individuals and communities can claim their rights. States Parties, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations, academia, media practitioners, and human rights defenders have all contributed significantly to transforming continental commitments into lived realities. Their contributions deserve our collective recognition and appreciation.

Yet, while we celebrate these accomplishments, we must remain mindful that the true measure of progress lies not in institutions alone, but in the everyday experiences of our people. Human rights are ultimately tested in the lives of those seeking justice, protection, participation, and opportunity. The woman denied equal access to resources, the youth facing exclusion, the family displaced by conflict, and the citizen awaiting justice remind us that our work remains unfinished.

### **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The African Human and Peoples' Rights Decade (2016-2026) represented a renewed continental commitment to fostering a culture of human rights across Africa, with particular emphasis on women's rights and gender equality. The Strategic Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human and Peoples' Rights in Africa (2024-2026) has further provided a practical roadmap for strengthening institutions, enhancing coordination, increasing public awareness, and supporting Member States in fulfilling their obligations.

As this Decade draws to a close, we must undertake a candid assessment of its achievements and shortcomings. We must consolidate the gains made, sustain successful initiatives, and ensure that unfinished priorities remain central to our future agenda. The enduring legacy of the Decade will ultimately be measured by the institutional capacity it has strengthened, the awareness it has created, and the confidence it has instilled among citizens seeking protection and justice.

This objective remains central to the work of the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security. Through our governance, human rights, conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives, we continue to address the structural grievances that undermine trust between citizens and public institutions. Our efforts to deepen synergies between the African Governance Architecture and the African Peace and Security Architecture reflect our conviction that sustainable peace and effective governance are inseparable from respect for human rights.

Similarly, our transitional justice initiatives seek to place accountability, victim-centred approaches, reconciliation and institutional reform at the heart of peacebuilding processes. Experience across the continent continues to demonstrate that durable peace cannot be achieved without justice, inclusion and respect for human dignity.

Several initiatives illustrate the progress we are collectively making.

In the area of business and human rights, the Department and the African Commission have advanced an extensive consultative process toward the development of the Draft AU Principles and Guidelines on Business and Human Rights. At the national level, countries including Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria and Liberia have adopted National Action Plans that provide an important foundation for implementation. The challenge before us now is to ensure that these commitments translate into responsible business conduct, environmental stewardship, respect for community rights, and effective access to remedies for affected populations.

We have also continued advancing the establishment of the Pan-African Human Rights Institute, including the development of institutional arrangements for its operationalization within existing AU structures. The Institute will strengthen African capacities in human rights education, research, policy development and professional training. In doing so, it will contribute to nurturing a new generation of African practitioners and scholars capable of shaping both continental and global human rights discourse.

Equally important are our efforts to combat hate speech and prevent the emergence of conditions that may lead to violence and social fragmentation. The collaborative platform currently under development seeks to bring together governments, human rights institutions, media actors, civil society organizations and development partners to strengthen prevention efforts, including in digital spaces. This work must strike the appropriate balance between protecting freedom of expression and addressing incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence.

We are also strengthening the integration of human rights indicators into continental early warning systems. Through regional capacity-building initiatives, national and regional stakeholders are enhancing their ability to identify and analyse human rights risks that may serve as early indicators of instability. Persistent exclusion, discrimination and restrictions on civic space often signal underlying tensions that, if left unaddressed, can escalate into conflict. Effective prevention requires that we act on these warning signs before crises emerge.

### **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Africa's human rights agenda also depends upon effective international cooperation and a confident African voice within global human rights governance.

The AU-UN Joint Framework on Human Rights has strengthened cooperation between the African Union and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights through enhanced dialogue, coordination and accountability initiatives. Likewise, our engagements through the AU-EU Human Rights Dialogue and the AU-China Human Rights Consultations provide opportunities to advance shared priorities and deepen technical cooperation.

Such partnerships must remain firmly grounded in African priorities and ownership. They should contribute to tangible improvements in the lives of African citizens while upholding the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights. Africa must continue to shape global conversations on development, technology, business responsibility, climate justice and access to justice, bringing to these discussions the perspectives and experiences of our peoples.

In this regard, the right to development remains especially significant. Article 22 of the African Charter recognized this right before its subsequent affirmation in the 1986 United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development. As we commemorate the fortieth anniversary of that Declaration, Africa has a unique responsibility to champion its effective implementation. In this spirit, the African Union Commission will convene a Commemorative Conference at its Headquarters in Addis Ababa, to which all of you are warmly invited.

Development must be measured not only by economic growth but by its impact on human well-being. It must expand opportunities, enhance dignity, reduce inequalities and enable meaningful participation in decision-making. The benefits of natural resource wealth must translate into improved health care, quality education, access to water and sanitation, decent livelihoods and greater prosperity for communities. This is the human-centred vision that should guide the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the African Continental Free Trade Area.

### **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

States Parties bear the primary responsibility for transforming the aspirations of the Charter into reality. Human rights become meaningful through laws that protect, institutions that serve, courts that deliver justice, and public policies that respond to the needs of people.

We therefore encourage renewed investment in strong and independent judiciaries, effective national human rights institutions, accessible remedies, and the implementation of decisions and recommendations issued by African human rights mechanisms.

State reporting under Article 62 remains an essential instrument for accountability, self-assessment and progress. Reporting processes founded on broad consultation can help identify achievements, expose implementation gaps, and mobilize support where needed. More importantly, these processes must be accompanied by concrete follow-up measures, clear responsibilities, realistic timelines and adequate resources. This Forum provides a valuable platform for sharing experiences and strengthening this cycle of reporting, dialogue and implementation.

As we commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the African Youth Charter, we must also reaffirm our commitment to meaningful youth participation. Africa's young people are not merely beneficiaries of governance processes; they are essential partners in shaping the continent's future. Their voices, creativity and leadership must be reflected in decision-making, peacebuilding efforts and accountability processes at all levels.

Let us therefore depart from this Forum with renewed resolve: a resolve to translate dialogue into action, commitments into implementation, and aspirations into measurable improvements in people's lives. Let us work together to advance stronger national follow-up mechanisms, enhance support for implementation, and demonstrate tangible results under the African Union Theme of the Year 2026: ***"Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063."***

On behalf of His Excellency Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, I reaffirm the unwavering commitment of the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security to working closely with States Parties, the African Commission, the PRC Sub-Committee, regional and international partners, and all stakeholders dedicated to advancing human and peoples' rights on our continent.

Forty years ago, the entry into force of the African Charter provided Africa with a common foundation for the protection of human dignity and fundamental freedoms. Our collective responsibility today is to ensure that its guarantees are experienced not as aspirations on paper, but as realities in the daily lives of our people.

May this anniversary serve as a moment of renewal and inspiration, strengthening our determination to build an Africa where every person can live in dignity, participate fully in society, and share equitably in the continent's peace, prosperity and development.

I thank you.