

## AFRICAN COURT COALITION

### GOODWILL MESSAGE DELIVERED ON THE OPENING OF THE JUDICIAL YEAR OF THE AFRICAN COURT ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES` RIGHTS:

20 February, 2023

First and foremost, the Coalition for an Effective African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights congratulates the African Court for this important initiative which is a continuation of what it has set to do since last year when it convened the inaugural opening of the judicial year under the theme, "*The African Court and the Africa We Want*". This year, the theme of the second opening of the Judicial Year, "***Integrating the jurisprudence of regional and international human rights mechanisms into national systems***" is yet a commendable one.

An approach that integrates regional and international human rights norms and standards into national systems and policies is an essential way to show commitment and respect of States and Governments obligations to regional and international Treaties. It is nevertheless an effective way of enabling compliance with decisions of regional and international human rights judicial and quasi-judicial bodies and notably decisions of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.

As Civil Society Organisations, it is our responsibility and obligation to play our respective roles in the integration process in the realization of the African Court that we want. Among many other roles, this should include creating awareness and popularize the work of the African Court, participating in constructive engagements and dialogues with our respective governments as well as with non-state actors in the promotion of the African Court and its functions, and also offer constructive and critical assessment of the work of the African Court.

Over the years, we at the African Court Coalition have progressively been executing our objective of advocating for an independent and effective African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights through various activities and initiatives that include dialogues with State and non-State actors. We commend the initiative of inter-generational dialogues that the African Court is geared to enhance this year especially with young legal professionals.

I am happy to inform you that with our continued engagement with different stakeholders through various activities, the Coalition has also planned to enhance engagement with young legal professionals this year in the efforts to increase awareness and visibility of the African Court. This is to show our continued support

in the work of the Court and in fulfilling our mission to mobilize and coordinate the diverse stakeholders of the African Court to support building of an institutionally strong and independent Court that delivers effectively and efficiently on its mandate, and one that is effectively serving and recognized by all the peoples of Africa and their States.

It is fair enough to acknowledge that integrating the jurisprudence of regional and international human rights mechanisms into national systems is a progressive process that requires efforts, expertise and resources especially by States and Governments, but where there is a will there is always a way, and commitments and obligations are meant to be fulfilled.

We would thus like to call upon all relevant stakeholders to be part of the process and take all the necessary measures towards the integration of international and regional human rights mechanisms, standards and norms into national systems to enhance the effectiveness of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. From State parties of the African Court Protocol, the relevant African Union organs, national and independent Human Rights institutions, the academia, Law societies, the media, Civil Society Organisations and the general public.

Last but not least, we cannot be conversing about integrating the jurisprudence of regional and international human rights mechanisms into national systems without being mindful of the fact that only 8 out of 33 State Parties to the African Court Protocol have deposited Article 34(6) Declaration to allow direct access to the African Court, and 33 out of 55 African Union countries have ratified the African Court Protocol. This has to change for if we have to move and make notable and substantial changes, we have to move collectively and together. No one, and no country should be left behind in the commitments to Human Rights duties and obligations in Africa, our beloved continent.

Thank you very much!

Asanteni sana!