Addis Ababa, October 25, 2023—The African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) have officially launched a three-year project to support AU member states as they incorporate the African Union Transitional Justice Policy (AUTJP) and undertake transitional justice processes at the national level. The project, named the Initiative for Transitional Justice in Africa (ITJA), will be implemented by a consortium of three organizations led by the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), the African Transitional Justice Legacy Fund (ATJLF), and the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR). The initiative is funded by the EU, which has provided a total of €5 million.

The launch event brought together government officials, policymakers, transitional justice practitioners, civil society representatives, and other stakeholders to review the ITJA’s fundamental components and encourage their participation in the project’s activities, as well as strategic cooperation among them, which is crucial to advancing transitional justice on the continent.

“We have no other choice than to push and promote transitional justice,” stated Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, in his opening
“Categorically, without it, conflicts will not be permanently resolved in Africa. It is necessary that we invest in transitional justice and accountability mechanisms to ensure that reconciliation and dialogue is the way to go. The effort being made under this initiative to train more people, especially youth and women, on transitional justice issues will be a great asset for the union as it will result in having an array of actors who will act in various capacities at sub-national, national, regional, and continental levels while promoting transitional justice.”

“As democratic governance, justice, and accountability are crucial pillars for conflict prevention and resolution, the EU is delighted to support through this new action the AU Transitional Justice Policy and to support its member states. This initiative is a welcome complement to the EU’s support to the African Governance and Peace and Security Architectures and is another example of the strong partnership between the African Union and the European Union,” said Deputy Head of EU Delegation to the African Union, Mr Riccardo Mosca.

Adopted in February 2019, the AUTJP provides AU member states with guidance on creating and implementing effective and credible transitional justice processes. An accompanying roadmap, developed by the AU Commission, lays out actionable steps for putting the policy into practice. Inspired by African values and based on best practices, lessons learned, and international norms, the AUTJP and roadmap describe a uniquely African approach to designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating transitional justice mechanisms.

The AUTJP represents a milestone toward tackling legacies of human rights abuses, redressing victims, and affirming their dignity. “The policy promises to usher in an era of peace, justice, reconciliation, social cohesion, and healing across the diverse societies of Africa,” noted Annah Moyo, CSVR’s Executive Director. “However, its efficacy lies in the ability of AU member states to carry it out.”

The purpose of the ITJA is to support stakeholders at the national and local levels as they operationalize the AUTJP and roadmap. It offers technical assistance and capacity building to AU member states, relevant AU organs, and Regional Economic Communities for designing and implementing tailored, gender-sensitive transitional justice mechanisms. The initiative also fosters research and knowledge production and management related to transitional justice experiences in Africa. Finally, it raises awareness about the AUTJP and enhances the engagement of civil society and victims’ groups with it and transitional justice processes in Africa.

Several African countries continue to grapple with recurring violent conflict and unresolved legacies of massive human rights violations, which has hindered sustainable peace and development in those societies and on the continent as a whole. “Historical socioeconomic inequality and marginalization, compounded by pervasive gender discrimination, exclusion of
young people, and xenophobia, have led to social unrest, violence, and human rights violations in some countries across the globe. These are root causes of conflict and atrocities,” explained Anna Myriam Roccatello, ICTJ’s Deputy Executive Director and Director of Programs. “Transitional justice principles and initiatives, however, can help society finally address these causes and create the conditions for lasting peace and prosperity.”

For this reason, the ITJA is vitally important as it provides technical and other support to member states that are either currently navigating or about to initiate transitional justice processes. It also helps local and national civil society actors—including victims’, women’s and youth groups—to more meaningfully shape, participate in, and monitor these mechanisms. In turn, the processes can more effectively redress victims and prevent future conflict and recurrence of abuses.

To schedule an interview or for more information, please contact:

- Ms. Limi Mohammed, Communication Focal Point and Web Administrator
  African Union Commission; Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department;
  Governance and Conflict Prevention Directorate
  Email: shashlm@africa-union.org

- Dr. John Ikubaje, Senior Political Officer
  African Union Commission; Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department;
  Governance and Conflict Prevention Directorate
  Email: gbodij@africa-union.org

- Prof. Eugene Bakama Bope, Transitional justice Specialist, Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department; Governance and Conflict Prevention Directorate
  Email: BakamaE@africa-union.org

- Mr. Biruk Feleke, Press and Information Officer
  Delegation of the European Union to the African Union
  Email: biruk.feleke@eeas.europa.eu

- Mr. Chris Boland, Senior Communications Associate
  ICTJ
  Email: cboland@ictj.org