

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

The Sixth African Union Commission (AUC) and Network of Africa National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) Policy Dialogue



Addis Ababa, 18 May 2023: The African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) organized the AUC-NANHRI Policy Dialogue on the State of National Human Rights Institutions in Africa, from 15 to 17 May 2023 at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This marks the 6th policy forum since its inception in 2017, a joint initiative by the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) of the Africa Union Commission (AUC), the African Union (AU) Permanent Representatives Committee (AU PRC), and the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI).

This Forum is an annual platform aimed at fostering dialogue among key actors towards strategic collaborations and insights that inform policy decisions and lead to actionable steps with regard to the implementation of human rights commitments in Africa.

This year's theme, "Championing a Human Rights Based Approach in the Implementation of the AfCFTA", was in line with the AU theme of the Year 2023 "Acceleration of AfCFTA Implementation". The AfCFTA is one of the flagship projects under the AU Agenda 2063 and a symbol of the African Renaissance, focusing on the economic renewal of Africa.

The forum was officially commenced by the opening remarks of Dr. Daniel Bekele (Chief Commissioner, Ethiopian Human Rights Commission), Hon. Remy Ngoy Lumbu (Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights), Hon. Justice Blaise Tchikaya, Vice-President, (African Court on Human and

Peoples' Rights), H.E. Amb. Bankole Adeoye (Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, African Union Commission), Adv Joseph Whittal (Vice Chairperson of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions), H.E. Ambassador Willy Nyamitwe (Vice-Chairperson Of The AU Permanent Representative Committee) and keynote address of Hon H.E. Gedion Timothewos Hessebon (the Attorney General of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia). The Forum was attended by 30 National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) from around the continent, among other participants including Members from the AUC-PRC, AUC Departments, AU Organs, the AfCFTA Secretariat, Human Rights Defenders, African Civil Society Organizational Networks, relevant UN bodies and Academia.

Among the deliberations were key interventions made by different NHRIs and other stakeholders, contributing to the implementation processes of the AfCFTA framework as well as presentations of Trade, social and environmental impacts of the AfCFTA. There was also a key session on the Role of partners in supporting a Human Rights Based Approach to the implementation of the AfCFTA.

As part of the forum, the Network of African National Human Rights launched 2 reports, the **NANHRI Baseline study and stakeholder mapping on the AfCFTA report**; and the **NANHRI Guiding Framework on Mainstreaming Human Rights in the AfCFTA** whose findings were also presented. While the baseline study highlights the importance of the National Human Rights Institutions to contribute to trade policies aligned in the framework, by providing a human rights-based approach, the Guiding Framework provides guidelines for the NHRIs to support this process effectively, as effective monitoring requires the development of customized tools.

A declaration was also adopted by all participants within this forum and will be disseminated soon to the public to assist in the implementation process by NHRIs.

For further information, please contact:

Mrs. Seraphine Kando, Human Rights Specialist | Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department | African Union Commission **Tel:** +251 115 517 700 | **E-mail:** kandos@africa-union.org | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Gilbert Sebihogo, Executive Director- NANHRI – E-mail: gsebihogo@nanhri.org

Mrs. Limi Mohammed, Website Administrator | Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department | African Union Commission **Tel:** +251 115 517 700 | **E-mail:** shashlm@africa-union.org | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Ms. Loyce Odhiambo, Communications & Advocacy Officer | NANHRI | E-mail: lodhiambo@nanhri.org