PRESS RELEASE

AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

ON THE OCCASION OF THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 2026 AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DAY UNDER THE THEME: "ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AFRICAN CHARTER: A JOURNEY TOWARDS THE AFRICA WE WANT"

21 OCTOBER 2026

On the occasion of the commemoration of Africa **Human Rights Day (AHRD) 2026** on the theme "***Adoption and implementation of the African Charter: A Journey Towards the Africa we want"***, I wish you all a *Happy Africa Human Rights Day. On this occasion. The Department of Political Affairs, Peace, and Security (PAPS) of* the African Union Commission, wishes to renew its commitment to the promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights as enshrined in the African Union Constitutive Act and in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The Charter gives legal expression to Africa's struggles for freedom, equality, and dignity. By recognizing individual and peoples' rights and the indivisibility of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, and the right to development it affirmed that development, democratic governance and peace, reinforce one another. This vision remains central to the AU Agenda 2063 and to the responsibility of public institutions and office holders, to serve their people in line with the social contract.

Over the decades, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, have helped to give effect to this commitment. And they continue to do so alongside national courts, national human rights institutions, and civil society.

Despite our modest progress, conflicts, discrimination, restrictions on civic participation and barriers to justice still deny many Africans the protection the Charter guarantees. The Commission therefore calls on Member States to scale up efforts to concretize their obligations through relevant national laws, public policy and budgets, implement applicable judgments and decisions, and act on recommendations. Periodic reporting under Article 62 should support an honest assessment of progress, accompanied by clear responsibilities, resources, and timelines for addressing outstanding gaps. This responsibility acquires particular significance as the AU Human and Peoples' Rights Decade draws to a close in 2026. And the Strategic Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human and Peoples' Rights in Africa, 2024–2026, provides an important basis for consolidating our efforts.

The journey towards Africa we want must be shaped by those whose rights are at stake. Women and young people, especially in deprived communities, must participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their lives. Children, older persons, persons with disabilities, refugees, internally displaced persons and marginalized communities must benefit equally from protection and public services. Human rights defenders, journalists, and civil society must be able to contribute without intimidation or reprisals.

May this occasion mark a renewed resolve to prevent violations, deliver remedies, and make public authority answerable to the people it serves.