

**PRESS RELEASE N.XXX/2015****CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON AFRICAN UNION TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE POLICY FRAMEWORK (ATJF) AS PART OF THE ACTION PLAN OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS STRATEGY FOR AFRICA**

Midrand, South Africa, 16 December 2015 - The Department of Political Affairs of the African Union (AU) in collaboration with the African Court on



Human and People's Right based in Arusha organised a brainstorming meeting on 16-18 December 2015 in Midrand, South Africa, to exchange view on the theme of the upcoming year: *"Human Rights in Africa with a particular focus on women"*

generally referred to as *"Project 2016"*, the Draft African Union Transitional Justice Policy Framework; and the meeting of the Human Rights and Transitional Justice Cluster of the African Governance Architecture (AGA).

The consultative meeting on the implementation of the AU Transitional Justice Policy Framework, as part of the Action Plan of the Human Rights Strategy for Africa, which brought together participants from AU Organs, CSOs, Political Parties and continental organisations dealing on the issues of human rights,

was co-chaired by Dr. Khabele Matlosa, Director of Political Affairs of the African Union Communication (AUC) and Justice Ben Kioko, of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Addressing participants on behalf of Dr. Aisha Laraba Abdullahi, Commissioner for Political Affairs of the AUC, Dr. Khabele explained that, several consultations among the core African Union Organs with mandates on human rights namely, the African Court on Human and People's Rights, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, the African Union Commission and the African Committee on the Rights and Welfares of the Child, agreed that it was fundamentally significant for the year 2016 to be declared the Year of Human Rights in Africa. The reason being that, the year 2016 would marks the 35th Anniversary of the adoption of the African Charter in 1981; the 30th Anniversary of the entry into force of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights in 1986; the 29th Anniversary of the operationalization of the Commission in 1987 ; 10th Anniversary of the African Court on Human and People's Rights; and the 13th Anniversary of the Maputo Protocol that ushered in a new thinking on how to address gender inequality and the rights of women in Africa.



According to the Director of Political Affairs of the AU, the African Year of Human Rights with Special Focus on the Rights of Women” is not only timely but justifiable. “The celebration among others would enhance public awareness on human rights; assess the ratification and implementation of the human rights instruments, in particular, the Maputo Protocol, and the progress made in advancing the rights of women since the adoption of the Protocol; it would also encourage AU Member States to develop policies, plans of actions and programmes on the promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights, and specific programmes with the intention of enhancing women's empowerment in all spheres of society on the continent”, underlined Dr, Khabele. (See complete statement of the AU Director of Political Affairs on the AU website: www.au.int).

In his opening address, Justice Kioko stated that the year 2016 will provide an opportunity for the entire continent to take stock of the human rights situation on the continent in general, and the rights of women in particular. “These Consultations will give us the opportunity to reflect and brainstorm on how to shape the course of human rights in particular, and the justice landscape on the continent as a whole”, he undersocerred.

Justice Kioko recalled that, the decision of the African Union to establish a Transitional Justice Framework is rooted in our history. He explained that, since independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s, most African governments have been undemocratic, repressive and authoritarian. This has often been marked by serious violations of human rights. The attempts to move away from this dark era of dictatorship with the advent of the third wave of democratization in the 1990s have been accompanied by numerous challenges.

“The African Union Transitional Justice Framework is thus a positive reaction to the numerous challenges African States face when confronted with violence as they transition from one political system to another or as they emerge from a violent situation”. Said the Judge, adding that, in a continent marked by violence and political upheaval, from the era of slave trade through colonialism, apartheid and dictatorship, one cannot help but focus on the transitional nature of many African societies. “The third wave of democratization of the late 1980s and early 1990s has given transitional justice a new and added impetus in Africa. The concept has now assumed a broader perspective involving a comprehensive re-examination of a society in transition from a retrospective position to a prospective one with democratic consolidation as one of its primary objectives. The democratization process in Africa, as anywhere else, invoked transitional justice principles in order to redress legacies of human rights abuses in a manner that respects and protects the dignity of survivors and their relatives, without threatening future peace and security” noted Justice Kioko. (See complete speech of Justice Kioko on the AU website: www.au.int).

Both Dr. Khabele and Justice Kioko congratulated the newly elected Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights, Hon. Commissioner Advocate Pansy Faith Tlakula. “We are confident that in her new role she will bring more vigor in the pursuit of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights on the continent”, they underlined.

A draft communication strategy as well as the preparations and planning for Project 2016 activities among others, was presented during the meeting.

EAT/

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