CLOSING REMARKS BY HONORABLE JUSTICE GERARD NIYUNGEKO, PRESIDENT OF THE AFRICAN COURT ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES’ RIGHTS AT THE SEMINAR FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS IN NIGERIA

1st December 2011, Abuja, Nigeria

Honorable Judges,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen

1. We have spent the entire morning sharing information about the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights, its establishment, its composition, its mandate, its role and functioning, as well as its current situation with regard to its judicial function, both in contentious and advisory matters. We have also clarified the role, responsibility and right of each of the organizations and institutions represented here on how to utilize the Court to advance human rights protection in Africa and in Nigeria.

2. I am extremely pleased with the manner in which we conducted our discussions, and the degree to which we went to explore the ways that we can employ, in our various capacities, to promote the Court, encourage the deposit of the declaration allowing direct access to individuals and NGOs, submit applications on contentious issues or request the Court for advisory opinion. While this meeting has now come to an end, we take away with us, the satisfaction that our discussions were fruitful in both substance and context.
At the beginning of this seminar, Justice Elsie Thompson explained that each of the organizations and participants has a role that they are expected to play in the promotional plan of the Court to ensure that it carries out its mandate. She particularly asked that you ponder on your particular input in this regard for posterity. I am therefore glad to note that our discussions clearly show that all participants understand that the success or failure of the Court is our collective responsibility.

**Dear Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

3. On behalf of my Colleagues, Judges of the African Court, I must therefore, first of all, thank once again the Federal Republic of Nigeria for opening this seminar and the Government of the Republic of Nigeria for the support they gave to this activity and for their willingness to consider the possibility of making the declaration enabling individuals and NGOs, under certain conditions, to access the Court, and how it can utilize the Court’s advisory jurisdiction. I wish that all other Member States of the African Union follow this lead.

I would also like to thank each of you, distinguished participants, not only for having accepted our invitation to participate in this seminar, but also for your enthusiastic and decisive contributions during the discussions.

May I also thank in particular the resource persons, presenters and panelists, who have prepared papers on the various topics, as well as all moderators who accepted to chair the various sessions.
I wish furthermore to express my gratitude to the Media which have covered this seminar and will go on covering the promotional activities of the Court in future.

Allow me also to thank the Registry of the Court and the Executive and Secretariat of the Nigerian Bar Association and the West African Bar Association, for the enormous amount of work they put in to organize the seminar, arrange the programme, flight schedules, accommodation, and all the little administrative tasks necessary to ensure that our discussions were held in a conducive environment.

Last but not least, on my own behalf, I wish to thank my fellow Judges of the African Court for their strong commitment and determination to ensure the promotion of the Court on the continent. I wish to thank in particular, all Judges for making the time to be here to participate fully in this event.

Dear participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. Let me end by expressing the expectation of the Court that you will all be able to honor the commitments you have taken, so that the judicial protection of human rights at a continental level, which is embodied by the Court, becomes a tangible reality. I wish that we meet again soon, either in other promotional activities of the Court, or at the seat of the Court, when some of you will have been enabled to
bring cases before the Court. We then hope to continue the relationship we started during this seminar.

On this note, I wish you all safe journey back to your bases, and I declare this seminar closed.

I thank you for your kind attention.

Abuja, 1\textsuperscript{st} December 2011