

**AFRICAN COURT COALITION GOODWILL MESSAGE: OPENING OF THE JUDICIAL YEAR  
OF THE AFRICAN COURT ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS, 2026**

**His Excellency John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana**

**Honorable Judge President of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, Justice  
Blaise Tchikaya**

**Her Excellency Ambassador Selma Malika Haddadi, Deputy Chairperson of the AUC**

**Honorable Zainab Athuman Katimba, Deputy Minister of Constitutional and Legal  
Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania**

**ALL PROTOCOL OBSERVED.**

On behalf of the African Court Coalition, it is an honour to deliver this goodwill message at the Opening of the Judicial Year of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, as the Court marks its 20th anniversary.

Twenty years is a significant institutional milestone. It represents not only longevity, but also clarified Human Rights standards under the African Charter and other relevant Human Rights instruments. Since its establishment under the 1998 Ouagadougou Protocol, the Court has evolved from a normative aspiration into a functioning continental judicial organ with a defined jurisprudential identity.

The African Court Coalition has, since its establishment, worked to support the Court's mandate through advocacy, strategic engagements, capacity building and awareness creation among others. We have consistently affirmed that;

Access to the Court for individuals and NGOs is the most crucial pillar of the Court. The status of Article 34(6) declarations thus remains a decisive factor in this regard. Renewed political will by Member States to accept direct access would significantly enhance the Court's protective reach and reinforce public confidence in continental adjudication.

Second; to ensure justice for victims of human rights violations, decisions of the Court must be complied with. The Coalition therefore recognises implementation as the central frontier in the dispensation of justice.

In our mission to mobilize and coordinate the diverse stakeholders of the African Court to support building of an institutionally strong, accessible and independent Court, the Coalition convened last week from 26 to 28 February for its 2026 Stakeholders' Platform in the celebration of 20 Years of the African Court by Reflecting on Achievements, Confronting Challenges, and Charting the Future.

Among key recommendations from our convening last week is that; For the next phase of the Court's evolution, stronger implementation mechanisms, enhanced engagements with States, and structured dialogue with executive branches and other stakeholders will be essential to ensure that the Court's decisions translate into concrete improvements in people's lives.

The second is visibility and public trust. Courts operate within ecosystems of perception. Increased engagement with media, Civil Society, academic institutions, and national bar associations can demystify procedures and promote understanding of the Court's mandate. A well-informed public is more likely to view the Court not as distant, but as relevant.

The third is the Courts' readiness and its procedural efficiency in determining and adjudicating emerging frontiers in the evolving complex areas of Artificial Intelligence and digital technology, climate and environmental justice and Business and Human Rights. As conversations continue around these frontiers and their profound impacts in human rights, it is vital that the Court is well prepared structurally and procedurally to keep pace with these evolving needs that are within the Courts' broader mandate.

### **Your Excellencies, Honourable Judges,**

Anniversaries are moments to honour leadership. We therefore acknowledge the vision of the founding architects of the African Union and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights; the dedicated current and former Judges of the Court, and the cooperation of States in compliance with the Courts' decisions. We also recognise the courage of litigants who have thrived to engage with this Court in the efforts to protect Human and Peoples' Rights of African citizens often in complex political environments.

For the African Court Coalition, this 20th anniversary is a reaffirmation of partnership. We remain committed to constructive engagement with the Court and with all stakeholders including States, Civil Society, national human rights institutions, bar associations, academia, and media, to strengthen implementation of decisions of the Court, increase ratifications and declarations, and cultivate a culture of Human Rights protection and promotion.

As the Court enters its third decade, the task for us all is clear: to deepen its jurisprudential impact and enhance its accessibility and visibility. In doing so, the Court will not only adjudicate disputes, it will continue to shape the normative trajectory of human rights protection across the continent.

On behalf of the African Court Coalition, I extend our congratulations on this 20-year milestone and our best wishes for a productive and impactful Judicial Year.

**I thank you.**

**Sophia Ebby, Coordinator, African Court Coalition.**