

**REMARKS BY HON. ZAINAB ATHUMANI KATIMBA (MP),  
DEPUTY MINISTER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL AFFAIRS  
OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA  
AT THE SOLEMN CEREMONY MARKING THE OPENING OF THE  
2026 JUDICIAL YEAR OF THE AFRICAN COURT ON HUMAN AND  
PEOPLES' RIGHTS**

**ARUSHA, 2 MARCH 2026**

**His Excellency John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of  
Ghana and Guest of Honour;**

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

**Honourable Lady Justice Bensaoula Chafika, Vice President of the  
African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights;**

**Honourable Ministers present;**

**Honourable Amos Gabriel Makalla, Regional Commissioner of  
Arusha;**

**Representatives of the Judiciary of the United Republic of Tanzania;**

**Representatives of African Union Institutions;**

**Dr. Robert Eno, Registrar of the African Court on Human and  
Peoples' Rights;**

**Members of the Diplomatic Corps;**

**Representatives of Civil Society;**

**Members of the Press;**

**Distinguished Guests;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

I convey warm and fraternal greetings from Her Excellency Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, a steadfast advocate for justice, constitutionalism, and the promotion and protection of human rights.

I also extend a sincere welcome to all distinguished participants who have travelled from across our country and from different parts of our great Continent to join us here in Arusha for this solemn occasion. Your presence here today reflects the high esteem in which you hold this Honourable Court and the collective commitment we share to advancing justice in Africa.

Indeed, we say "Karibuni sana," meaning you are most welcome. I assure you that Tanzania's long-standing tradition of hospitality will embrace you. Karibuni sana to Tanzania, a land of peace, unity, and harmony, and a proud Host State of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.

**Honourable President,**

The United Republic of Tanzania considers it a profound privilege to host the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. It is therefore a singular

honour for me to deliver these goodwill remarks on behalf of the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania.

The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights has a noble mandate: to ensure the protection of human and peoples' rights across our Continent. This important journey began twenty (20) years ago, and today, Tanzania proudly joins the rest of Africa in congratulating the Court on its twentieth anniversary.

As the Host State, we can confidently affirm that these two decades have been marked by dedication, resilience, and unwavering commitment. They have been years of tireless effort, driven by the determination to ensure that the people of Africa have meaningful access to justice at both the regional and international levels.

The Court has also made significant contributions to the enduring vision of "African Solutions to African Problems", by strengthening an adjudicatory system that bridges diverse legal traditions across the Continent and advances justice for all.

This has not been an easy task. Yet for two decades, the Court has navigated complex legal, political, and institutional landscapes with prudence, integrity, and professionalism. Through its jurisprudence, it has progressively shaped continental human rights standards and reinforced the rule of law within Member States.

**Honourable President,**

We are aware that, in the discharge of its noble mandate, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights has encountered some challenges. These include hesitancy among some States to accede to the Court's

jurisdiction, withdrawals of declarations made under Article 34(6) of the Protocol Establishing the Court, and the non-implementation of certain Judgments.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the Court has remained steadfast in its resolve and consistent in its jurisprudential development. Through perseverance, institutional maturity, and judicial independence, it has continued to strengthen the African human rights framework and uphold the principles enshrined in the African Charter.

The strength of the African Court ultimately reflects our collective commitment to the rule of law, accountability, and human dignity.

**Honourable President,**

As the Host State and an early supporter of the Court's jurisdiction, the United Republic of Tanzania remains steadfast in its commitment to strengthening the African human rights system. Our engagement reflects not merely an obligation but a firm conviction that justice, accountability, and constitutionalism are indispensable pillars of sustainable peace and development across our Continent.

Tanzania's relationship with the African Court dates back to the Court's establishment in 2006 and has since been characterised by sustained cooperation and mutual respect. As the Court commemorates two decades of service, this milestone offers an opportunity to acknowledge Tanzania's engagement with the Court's processes, which has contributed to the growth and refinement of its jurisprudence and to the broader development of continental human rights standards.

In this regard, Tanzania has taken steps to implement certain decisions of the African Court, integrating aspects of its jurisprudence into domestic judicial practice and contributing to ongoing legal and institutional reforms.

For example, the decision in *Alex Thomas v. Tanzania* (Application No. 005/2013) contributed to developments that culminated in the enactment of the Legal Aid Act [CAP. 21]. Likewise, in *Attorney General v. Dickson Paulo Sanga* [2020] TZCA 371, the Court of Appeal drew on the principles articulated in *Anaclet Paulo v. Tanzania* (Application No. 016/2017) when assessing the legality of section 148(5) of the Criminal Procedure Act, which concerns bail restrictions.

As a Member State, and in evidence of its continued cooperation, the United Republic of Tanzania remains engaged in constructive dialogue with the Court on matters relating to access under Article 34(6) of the Protocol. This dialogue reflects our commitment to ensuring that the African human rights system continues to evolve in ways that strengthen mutual confidence, institutional effectiveness, and the collective aspiration for justice and accountability.

**Honourable President,**

As we look ahead to the next two decades, engagement with all key stakeholders must be strengthened. This includes Member States, African Union organs, legal practitioners, academia, civil society, the media, and the wider public. Enhanced awareness of the Court's mandate, jurisprudence, and contributions will foster greater public confidence, cooperation, and support.

**Honourable President,**

The commemoration of this milestone, under the theme “**20 Years of Service in Protecting Human and Peoples’ Rights in Africa**”, offers a timely opportunity to reflect on the Court’s journey, celebrate its milestones, and draw lessons to inform its future direction.

**Honourable President,**

As this Court marks this important milestone, may the coming decades further consolidate its noble mandate as a steadfast guardian of human and peoples’ rights and as an enduring beacon of Africa’s justice, dignity, and moral authority.

The United Republic of Tanzania commends the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights for its dedicated efforts to promote and protect human rights and for its pivotal role in the African human rights system.

In closing, I welcome our distinguished guests once again. Should time permit, we invite you to experience Tanzania’s northern natural heritage, from the Serengeti and Ngorongoro to Arusha National Park to the majestic Mount Kilimanjaro and exquisite Zanzibar.

**ASANTENI SANA, NA KARIBUNI TENA.**