



CONCEPT NOTE

Theme: REIMAGINING THE AFRICAN COURT ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS AFTER TWENTY YEARS

A VIRTUAL COLLOQUIUM ON THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AFRICAN COURT

A Frank Talk with the Citizens



20 YEARS¹ OF PROTECTING HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS IN AFRICA

1. Background and Rationale

The adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (the Protocol) in 1998 was a turning point in the protection of human and peoples' rights on the African continent. In 2004, the Protocol entered into force and in 2006, the first Judges of the Court were sworn-in.

For two decades, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (the African Court) has delivered landmark judgments on elections, freedom of expression, right to participate in government, fair trial, the death penalty, peoples' rights, and state accountability. It has also rendered ground breaking advisory opinions to clarify provisions in the African Charter and other human rights instruments.

Yet, today, the African Court stands at a crossroads. It faces persistent challenges: low ratification of the Protocol, withdrawal of declarations deposited in accordance with Article 34(6), limited state compliance with its decisions, funding constraints, lack of awareness and questions about accessibility to ordinary citizens.

This Virtual Colloquium is premised on the belief that the next 20 years of the African Court must be shaped not only by States and lawyers, but by citizens for whom the Court was established in the first place. Reimagining the African Court requires asking important questions about the 'old' African Court of the last twenty years, to shape a 'new' African Court for the next twenty years. What should the African Court look like to serve victims, communities, and the African public effectively? What reforms, partnerships, and narratives are needed? What is the African Court we want to take us the Africa we want in 2063?

The Colloquium will therefore be a frank and constructive engagement with the African citizens: acknowledging successes and failures, whilst proposing constructive practical pathways forward.



2. Goal

To convene African citizens, legal practitioners, scholars, activists, and AU stakeholders for an open, solutions-oriented discussion on the future of the African Court.

3. Expected outcomes

By the end of the Colloquium, participants will:

1. **Assessment:** Take stock of the Court's achievements, challenges, and impact over the past 20 years;
2. **Reimagine:** Propose citizen-centered reforms on mandate, access, enforcement, and communication;
3. **Synergy:** Propose strategies to enhance complementarity among AU Human Rights organs, and link human rights work to African priorities; and
4. **Commitment:** Develop a Citizens' Statement with recommendations to the AU, the Court, and Civil society.

4. Theme and Sub-themes

Main Theme: The main theme of the Colloquium is "*Reimagining the African Court after Twenty Years*"

Sub-themes: The sub-themes will include, but not limited to:

The discussions will focus on the following sub-themes:

1. **Effectiveness and Compliance:** Why states do not implement decisions. Role of key stakeholders: the Court, the Permanent Representative Committee, Executive Council and AU Assembly, Civil Society, Lawyers, etc;
2. **Technology and Citizen Engagement:** How to leverage Technology and Artificial Intelligence responsibly to meaningfully engage with citizens;



3. **The Next 20 Years:** Reimagine the African Court that will respond to the priorities of the continent.

5. **Format and Platform**

The Meeting will be virtual, and will include presentation of papers on the above sub-themes from experts, and may include panel discussions, and open discussion from participants. Each theme will be carefully moderated to ensure frankness, respect, and practical solutions. The Platform used will be Zoom or Teams.

6. **Date**

The meeting is proposed for 26th October 2026.

7. **Time**

The Colloquium will be held from 11am – 5pm East African Time (EAT). EAT is GMT+3

8. **Language**

The Colloquium will be held simultaneously in all the African Union languages i.e.: Arabic, English, French, Kiswahili, Portuguese and Spanish.

9. **Target Participants**

The meeting will be opened to:

- i. *All African Citizens in Africa and the diaspora;*
- ii. *Human rights lawyers and CSOs;*
- iii. *Academics and students of law/political science;*
- iv. *Representatives of Member States of the African Union, the African Court, African Commission, and other AU Organs and institutions; and*



v. *Journalists and digital creators.*

Expected attendance: 200-500 virtual participants

10. Expected Outputs:

1. Citizens' Statement on Reimagining the African Court - to be submitted to the AU and the Court;
2. Video recordings and transcript for advocacy and education; and
3. Network of citizens committed to working with the Court.

11. Organizers and Partners

This meeting is organized by the African Court, in collaboration with the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), established in 2004. ECOSOCC is an advisory organ of the African Union that facilitates the participation of civil society organisations in the AU's work. It contributes to the development and implementation of AU policies and programmes through advice, studies and recommendations, while promoting human rights, the rule of law, good governance, democratic principles, gender equality and children's rights. ECOSOCC also plays an important role in strengthening partnerships between the AU and African civil society and in advancing the Union's broader vision and objectives.

12. Budget Note

The African Court will cover the costs of platform, interpretation, documentation, outreach, and post-colloquium advocacy. However, voluntary contributions and support in whatever form are welcomed.

13. Contact and inquiry

For inquiries and participation, please contact Mr. Maulo Nfinda Dombaxi, Legal Officer at: Maulo.Dombaxi@african-court.org with a copy to Ms. Meredith D.



Lwanga, Senior Legal Aid Officer and Head, Legal Aid Unit at:
Meredith.lwanga@african-court.org

14. Registration and media communication

For partnership, support or media, please contact: Ms. Chipiliro Kansilanga, Senior Communication Officer and Head of Communication, Chipiliro Kansilanga-Ngue - Chipiliro.Kansilanga@african-court.org) and Mr. Romaric Go, (Gor Bi Romaric - Romaric.Gor@african-court.org) Webmaster of the African Court. All participants will be required to register in advance, and details of registration will be communicated in due course.