



**STATEMENT BY
H.E. AMB. THOMAS KWESI QUARTEY
DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

AT

**THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 4TH AFRICA JUDICIAL DIALOGUE
ORGANIZED BY THE AFRICAN COURT ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES'
RIGHTS
(AfCHPR)**

**KAMPALA, UGANDA
30 OCTOBER 2019**

Your Excellency, Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda;

Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Uganda;

Honourable Chief Justice of the Republic of Uganda;

Your Excellencies, Ministers and Officials of the Government of the Republic of Uganda;

Honourable Justice Sylvain Ore, President of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights;

Honourable Chief Justices, Presidents of Supreme and Constitutional Courts of African Union Member States;

Honourable Presidents and Judges of International, Continental, Regional and Sub-regional Courts;

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Distinguished Representatives of the African Union Organs and Institutions

Distinguished Representatives of the National Human Rights Institutions;

Distinguished Representatives of the UN Agencies;

Distinguished Representatives of the Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations;

Distinguished Guests;

Colleagues Staff of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights;

Colleagues from the African Union Commission;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All Protocol Dully Observed.

I feel greatly honoured and privileged to be afforded the opportunity to address this august assembly on behalf of H.E. Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, on this auspicious occasion of the 4th Africa Judicial Dialogue organized by the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.

First and foremost, allow me to express on behalf of the African Union Commission, our heartfelt appreciation to the Government and the people of the Republic of The Uganda, the Pearl of Africa, for the warm hospitality accorded to me and my delegation since our arrival in this beautiful city of Kampala. I also commend the leadership and commitment of the Republic of Uganda to the African Union Human Rights Agenda as clearly demonstrated by hosting this important dialogue.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

You recall that in 2015, our Heads of State and Government adopted Agenda 2063 as the Continent's development blueprint for the next 50 years. Specifically, Aspiration 3 of Agenda 2063 envisages an Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and rule of law. This Aspiration puts emphasis on, among other things, the need to build a culture of human rights as one of the durable ways of realizing a united, prosperous and peaceful Africa. In this regard, our gathering here today is evidence of our collective dedication and commitment to this vision and the Union's broader efforts towards the Africa We Want.

As we proceed with the implementation process of Agenda 2063, we must admit the challenges faced by our beloved continent in the promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights. This requires us to focus our eyes on how best to advance rights that address underdevelopment, poverty, inequality, marginalization and exclusion on our continent as we make concerted efforts towards effective implementation of Agenda 2063. Beyond pursuing our noble agenda for greater enjoyment of civil rights and political liberties, we have to redouble our efforts to ensure that the African people enjoy the right to food, the right to safe water and sanitation, the right to housing, the right to education, the right to health, the right to decent clothing, the right to clean environment etc.

The African continent has witnessed decades of numerous human rights challenges resulting from a diverse range of factors, which include, among others, war, poverty, corruption, autocratic governance and exclusion of women. It is against this background that the AU Member States solemnly resolved to promote and safeguard freedom, justice,

equality and human dignity in Africa by putting in place instruments and mechanisms to enforce these values.

This commitment of our Heads of State and Government paved the way for the adoption and ratification of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and its Protocols. These instruments represents the foundational stone of the African Human Rights System. They are unique to other continental and global human rights instruments because they cover internationally accepted human rights standards while also recognizing unique African values peculiar to our continent. These instruments provide for Civil and Political Rights, Social, Economic and Cultural Rights, Peoples' and Group Rights with clear duties and responsibilities of each individual in our societies. These are Instruments that we should all be proud of, honour and cherish its existence.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

As you aware, our Heads of State and Government declared 2019 as the “***Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa.***” This theme was launched at the AU Summit in Addis Ababa in February 2019. This theme in itself sufficiently demonstrates the acuteness of our challenges and the urgent and imperative need to work together to afford all African citizens the inalienable right to live free, dignified and be productive.

It is needless to recall on this great day the primary duty of all African States to guarantee these fundamental and inalienable rights. In this connection, the States concerned should, in dignity and freedom, create the necessary and appropriate conditions for all their citizens to return home. This occasion is also a timely opportunity to thank host countries for their commendable efforts and sacrifices in favour of refugees. At the same time, I would like to underscore the need for all States to safeguard the principles enshrined in the 1969 Convention on the Specific Aspects of African Refugees, including the principles of non-refoulement and burden sharing, not to mention the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons, known as the Kampala Convention.

Our shared vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa driven by its own citizens is the irreplaceable tool of our influence on the international scene. This common vision is also the instrument to fast-track our integration through an African space of freedom, opportunities, progress and development. Our duty is to tackle head-on the paradox that makes this potentially rich continent the continent with the largest number of poor countries.

It is intolerable that our young people, the engine of transformation and development, continue in successive waves to embark on perilous journeys across oceans and deserts, for want of projects that instil hope and lead to a positive future.

Since the Kigali Extraordinary Summit of 21 March 2018 on the Continental Free Trade Area, we are working hard to come up with prospects that hold for the future. Our hope is that Africa as a bloc will become a major and an indispensable partner in world trade. Parallel to this promising African integration project, more efforts are required regarding the protocol on the free movement of people and the African passport.

I welcome the growing number of states that have implemented relaxation measures of their entry visa policies for African citizens. I urge the Member States that have not yet done so to join without delay the Agreement on the Single African Air Transport Market, another flagship project that is mobilizing us in more ways than one.

In this collective effort, I would like to place special emphasis on the role of the grassroots actors namely the African civil society organizations, the youth and women who, over and above the activities of the States, are doing a remarkable work of sensitization and mobilization among the various strata of the population. Their efforts exerted often under difficult conditions cement and strengthen the resilience of African people and their hold on shaping their own destiny.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

This 4th Africa Judicial Dialogue is taking place under the theme “Tackling Contemporary Human Rights Issues: The Role of the Judiciary in Africa”. This is indeed an occasion to call on our members of the Judiciary at all levels; continental, regional and national, to collectively work together to promote and protect the human and peoples’ rights in Africa. This could only be done through an enhanced coordination and collaboration as well as sharing of information and best practices.

On the other hand, I would like to seize this opportunity to call on our Member States to ratify, domesticate and implement all AU human rights and shared values treaties. This is also an opportunity to remind our Member States on the need to fully implement all decisions and recommendations made by all AU organs with a human rights mandate. This will provide the political support that is needed to build a human rights system that is effective, and strong. A system that is respectful and trusted by the African people.

The vision of a peaceful, united and prosperous Africa set out in Agenda 2063 cannot be achieved only through sound planning and results-oriented policies and actions. It needs our collective resolve to work together for the implementation of these policies and action.

Once again, I would like on behalf of the African Union Commission to express our appreciation to the People and the Government of the Republic of Uganda for hosting this important event and to the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights for taking the initiative to organize this important dialogue.

As I conclude, I wish to invite you to contribute your ideas and suggestions on how we can move forward together and make this meeting a success.

I thank you for your kind attention.