

**INTERSESSION ACTIVITY REPORT OF
COMMISSIONER MELO, VICE CHAIRPERSON**

43rd Ordinary Session

INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with rule 87 of the rules of procedure of the ACHPR, the following is an account of activities undertaken during the inter-session in my capacity as Commissioner, as Chairperson of working groups (Specific Issues and ECOSOC).

I- ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN AS COMMISSIONER

2. From 3rd -4th December 2007, I attend in Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt, a Conference on Democracy and Human Rights in Africa, co-organized by UNESCO and Egyptian National Human Rights Council. The conference has been an opportunity to discuss strategies for the ratification of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance adopted by the African Union in January 2007. It is important to indicate that ratifications are not forthcoming since the adoption of this instrument. I called upon the Secretariat to insert in the Terms of Reference of Commissioners' promotional missions the ratification of this Charter.
2. The conference has been also an occasion to discuss important items such as: the role of National Human Rights Institutions (NIHR) in promoting democracy in general, the promotion and the protection of human and peoples' rights in particular. I took the opportunity of my participation in this conference to present the Commission's recommendations on the Banjul and other Brainstorming as well as on the reports presented by NHRI. One of the most important

recommendations during this conference has been the proposal to elaborate a glossary on certain concepts of Human Rights.

3. From 01- 02 December 2007 I took part in the 16th Annual Board Meeting of the International Penal Reform. The main aim of the meeting was to design strategies to implement its strategic plan of action. The strategies target mainly governments with the objective to help them respect the minimum standards on prisons conditions, and other main issues prioritized by International Penal Reform stakeholders.
4. From 18th to 22nd February 2008, I took part in the 4th extraordinary session of the Commission held in Banjul, The Gambia to consider the Rules of Procedure of the African Commission. Based on the recommendations of the 4th extraordinary session, I took part in a meeting chaired by Chairperson to plan main intersession activities for the Secretariat of the African Commission.
5. Moreover, a plan of action of the bureau will be discussed with the Chairperson during this session.
6. At the invitation of Minority Rights Group International and the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies with Collaboration of the Centre for Human Rights of the University of Pretoria, South Africa, I attended from 10-12th March 2008, a meeting on minority rights. Among other issues, the meeting discussed criteria to establish concepts of minority rights and the way forward. In this regard, it has been decided to create a minority rights forum

and a meeting in which I was invited, has been held on the 5th May. Unfortunately I could not attend due to the session, however, I will share with the commission the outcome of the meeting.

7. From 3-4 April 2008, I attend and present a short opening speech at the Second Annual Conference on the Implementation of the Optional Protocol on Convention Against Torture (OPCAT) organized by Scholl of the University of Bristol(United Kingdom) in collaboration with the African Commission on Human and People's Rights and South African Human Rights Commission. My colleagues Commissioners Malila and Atoki also attended the Conference and presented an item related to their mandates.
8. In Mozambique, the relationship I built with civil society when I was Special Rapporteur on the Rights of women continues to yield positive return through invitations from several women organizations. Hence, I took part in the following activities during the intersession:
 - i) During a meeting with the Minister of Interior I urged the latter to insert in the current revised penal code provisions prohibiting and sanctioning violence against women, such as torture. I also urged the Minister to work on provisions preventing and combating torture. I welcomed the request made by the Minister to assist the Ministry of Justice on provisions I suggested. Following this meeting I was given the plan of action on Gender Equality from the ministry of interior. I am currently working on this plan with the representative of Ipas

in Mozambique along with Mozambican Lawyers Association.

- ii) In March 2008, I attended in Maputo, a meeting organized by Mozambican Women Forum, to examine the National Plan of Action for Advancing of Women in Mozambican government so as to harmonize it with the Protocol to the African Charter on the rights of women in Africa. Subsequent meetings are planned in order to discuss with the Minister of Women and Social Action, Justice and Labour, the harmonization of the African Union Protocol on Women rights in Africa with the above referenced plan.
- iii) In the same month of March 2008 I met with Mozambican Women Forum to discuss the strategy to lobby the parliamentarians with the purpose to adopting the Draft law on Violence against women, and a draft law on conditions for legal abortion, deposited in the Parliament by the government.
- iv) I am currently working on the request to make comments on draft SADC Gender Protocol, made by the Centre for Human Rights of the University of Pretoria. My comments will be sent to the center as well as to my colleagues
- v) During the intersession, I undertook some lobbyism activities. Hence, during a workshop in Pretoria on minority rights, I discuss with a woman parliamentarian from Uganda and Botswana the ratification by these countries of the Protocol on

the Rights of Women in Africa. I made a presentation on the provisions of the protocol to address the problem of the Uganda participant related to the right to abortion which, according to the latter has been an obstacle for Uganda to ratify the said protocol. The main idea which came out during this discussion was the suggestion to liaise with Tanzanian parliament to get their experience regarding safe abortion. I sent this information to my colleague, Commissioner Maiga for follow up. Participants to that meeting sent their regards to Commissioner Maiga current Special Rapporteur on the rights of Women in Africa.

- vi) During the intersession, I also shared with my colleagues information received pertaining to their mandate that was the case on information received on conditions of detentions in Sierra Leone prisons, namely regarding pregnancy in prisons.
9. In line with the outcome of the Conference on Minority rights held in Pretoria, I am in the process of disseminating a document targeting all stakeholders, including government, in Mozambique. I count therefore on the collaboration of the Minority Rights Group International and the Centre of Human Rights of the University of Pretoria.
10. I took the opportunity of my participation in the OPCAT Conference in Cape Town, to discuss with OPCAT representative the possibility to design strategies targeting Lusophone countries on the ratification of the Convention Against Torture. We are in the process of contacting partners in these

countries and sending them relevant instruments including the OPT and the Robben Island Guidelines.

11. At the local level I sent copy of these instruments to the following institutions:
Minister of Interior, high level authorities of the Minister of Defence, 11 provincial judges and prosecutors, Minister of Justice, Minister of Women, General Commander of the Police, all Commanders of police stations in the 11 provinces and Maputo city and National General Director of Prisons Services with the recommendation to make copies to their officers in charge on this matter.
12. From 4th to 5th May 2008 I took part in the NGO forum in Ezulwini, Kingdom of Swaziland. I chaired the discussion of the interest group on ECOSOC and gave the closing speech.
13. On the 8th May 2008, I chaired the meeting of the working group on ECOSOCC during which we discussed our plan of action for the rest of 2008 calendar year and beyond.
14. It is worth mentioning that the promotional mission scheduled to Angola from 9th to 14 April this year did not take place because we have not received the authorization from the government of this country. I therefore call on representatives present in this room to endeavour to give speedy response to our request for promotional and other missions.

ACTIVITIES WITH SECRETARIAT

15. During the intersession, I spent important part of my time working with the Secretariat through exchange of correspondence between the Chairperson and the Secretary in order to improve the work of the Commission and precisely on the follow up activities as decided during the 4th Extraordinary session held in Banjul from 18th to 25th of February 2008. Correspondence covered also the revitalization of the working group on ECOSOC.