

ACTIVITY REPORT

INTRODUCTION

This report covers the activities I undertook as a member of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights during the period December 2008 – May 2009 to promote the work of the African Commission in particular and human rights in general.

1. **10th SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (HRC)**

During the 3rd Week in March, 2009, I attended the 10th Session of the UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL in Geneva, Switzerland.

As well known, the HRC is an inter-governmental body within the UN system, created in 2006 mainly to address human rights violations in the 192 UN member states.

I was privileged to attend some segments of the 10th Session during which a number of states, including BURKINA FASO, presented their four yearly reports under the Universal Periodic Review. This procedure is obligatory on each UN Member State to declare what action it has taken to improve the human rights situation in the country and what has been done to fulfill human rights obligations. It is a states driven mechanism composed of 47 member states who form the HRC. These 47 states are also the UPR Working Group which carries out the review. It also has a think tank of experts called the ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

During the review any member state can take part in the dialogue or discussion with the state under review.

The UPR is carried out in open session and NGO's take part in the form of providing information in what is known as the "Other Stake holder's report" which is considered during the review.

2. **MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE 10TH SESSION OF THE HRC**

The President of the HRC at the session H E DR MARTIN I UHOMOIBHI, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in Switzerland, was gracious enough to grant me an audience in spite of his very busy schedule

The meeting went very well with a mutually agreed proposal between HRC and the ACHPR to collaborate under the framework of,

- The Advisory of Committee (experts) and ACHPR can study areas of collaboration in respect of the special sessions and investigations of the HRC.
- Contributions that can be made by the ACHPR to the UPR.

3. **MEETING WITH THE COORDINATOR, AFRICA UNIT, OHCHR**

MR SCOTT CAMBELL, Coordinator of the Africa Unit, Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division, of the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, also kindly gave to me part of his very busy time.

He informed me that the Division is always represented at our ordinary sessions and would like to see reciprocity in that regard.

He also informed me that the UN is working with the AU on resolution on a Human Rights Strategy through the UN Regional Representative in Africa. He was of the view that the ACHPR should be involved in the process. The resolution is scheduled to be passed by the end of this year.

He encouraged the ACHPR to conduct more joint missions with UN mechanisms and special procedures.

We discussed funding possibilities and technical assistance and agreed that an MOU could best form the basis of our collaboration.

4. **MEETING WITH THE CHIEF, GROUPS IN FOCUS, OHCHR-MR KARIM GHEZRAOUI,**

The head of this section also kindly gave me some of his valuable time.

We discussed possibilities of closer links between the office and the African Commission, especially in respect of our mechanisms on the rights issues of Indigenous people. He was of the view that this linkage was especially important due to the fact that UN Special Rapporteurs on indigenous peoples rights tended to concentrate more of their efforts on the American Continent.

We agreed generally on sharing of information, documents, reports and collaboration on the calendar of our programs to facilitate attendance of meetings.

I am glad to note that we have made a good start by sending a number of relevant mission reports to the OHCHR through the AU Office in Geneva. In response, MR JAMES ANAYA, Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights and

Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People has written to me through our Secretariat expressing keen interest to collaborate with the ACHPR on the rights of Indigenous people.

The African Union Office in Geneva facilitated all these meetings. They would have been impossible without their help for which I am very grateful. In fact, the office was instrumental in the invitation to the ACHPR to attend this 10th Session of the HRC.

The Office also facilitated my attendance of the meetings of the Africa Group of Ambassadors during which strategies and consensus were established prior to each meeting of an agenda item of the HRC.

In conclusion, the African Commission is called upon to take up the challenge and opportunity to reach out and establish the necessary institutional linkages with the UN Human Rights System, starting with the OHCHR and the HRC.

5. **MEETING OF ILO/ACHPR PROJECT**

During the intersession, I attended the validation workshop of the report of this project involving a three year research on the constitutional and legislative protection of rights of indigenous populations in 24 African Countries.

The workshop was held in Banjul between the 10th and 11th of May, 2009, facilitated by the Centre for Human Rights of the Faculty of Law of the University of Pretoria. At the end of the workshop, the overview report on 24 African states Studied, was unanimously validated and will be presented to the Commission at this session for adoption.

6. **MEETING WITH INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

I attended the meeting which took place on the 12th of May 2009 in Banjul.

Presentations were made by the ACHPR Secretariat on the structure and operations of the African Commission and its Interim Rules of Procedure. The delegates from the Inter-American Commission, also made presentation of the structure and operation of their Commission, particularly in relation to the Inter-American court on Human Rights.

This meeting, even though a very short one, was very useful for our understanding of the two systems and the experience gained by the Inter-American commission in its relation with the Inter-American Court on Human Rights.

Musa N Bitaye
(COMMISSIONER)