

Day 2

17 May 2007

Daily Session Briefing to the Headquarters of the African Union, 15 – 31 May 2007

The second day commenced with the consideration of the human rights situation in Africa. Statements were made by the following State Parties: Sahawari Democratic Arab Republic, Tunisia, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Rwanda, Sudan, Egypt, Zimbabwe, Mauritania, Libya and Burundi. Each state congratulated the African Commission and the government and peoples of Ghana for organizing and hosting the session.

The Algerian delegate, for example, stated that a lot of human rights strides have been accomplished in Algeria since the last session. Algeria, he told the Commission has taken steps to hold legislative elections as part of the irreversible democratic process and measures are being put in place for the forthcoming elections to be as free and fair as possible.

The Ethiopian delegate also informed the Session that progress has been made in the field that progress has been made in the field the Commission not adopts the resolution to be submitted to it by the NGO Form concerning persons being tried for terrorist offences. He promised that Ethiopia would be submitting its long overdue report to the 42nd Session.

The Sudanese delegate informed the Commission that though Darfur is still problematic, his government is ready to resume negotiations with warring parties in Darfur. He argued that contrary to what is being reported in the media, the situation in Dafur is improving. He also said that measures have been taken for the setting up of a national human rights commission to address some of the human rights issues in that country.

The Zimbabwean delegate said that the history of Zimbabwe has been distorted. Giving a brief history of the political difficulties the country is currently facing, he said that the government's decision to redistribute land has incurred the wrath of white farmers, who with the support of the Western countries are now campaigning against the Zimbabwean government through the creation and funding of hundreds of NGOs working in the field of human rights and even

political parties. The delegate called upon the African Union and the African Commission not to be an accomplice in the regime change agenda of the Western countries.

All the states emphasized their support for the African Commission and the value accorded to human rights by their national governments.

Statements were then delivered on behalf of three intergovernmental organizations: a statement by the representative of the OIF (Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie), Committee of Experts on the Rights and the Welfare of the Child and a Declaration by the Representative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Among other issues raised by the representative of the UNHCR, he said that the Working Group on the Darfur established by the Human Rights Council (HRC) is still concerned about the situation in Darfur where human rights violations are ongoing and their perpetrators unpunished.

Four National Human Rights Commissions also delivered statement, including statement by the representative of the Togo National Human Rights Commission, statement by the representative of the National Human Rights Commission of Mauritania and a statement by the representative of the Nigeria National Human Rights Commission.

A number of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) also delivered statement, including; World Organisations Against Torture, Association for the Prevention of Torture, RADDHO, African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Centre, Mozambican League for Human Rights, Centre for Housing Rights and Eviction in Africa (Ghana Chapter), Tunisian Association for the Rights of the Child, MPIDO Kenya, Aid the Children Network (the Gambia), FIDH, ICJ, Centre for Reproductive Rights in Kenya, Equality now, Human Rights Watch HURISA, UNIPROBA, EHAHRD, Cairo Institute for HR, GERDES Mauritania, Amnesty International, WILDAF, Centre for Minority Rights in Kenya.

The session was adjourned for Friday, 18 May to hear the reports of Kenya and Zambia.