

Republic of Mozambique

Speech by Her Excellency the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Mozambique at the Opening of the 46th African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Session

Banjul, November 2009

It was with great pleasure that we accepted the invitation to salute, on behalf of the Member States of the African Union, all the participants to the 46th session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Allow me to use this opportunity to express our profound gratitude and appreciation to the Government of the Republic of The Gambia for the excellent hospitality accorded to us since our arrival.

Similarly, we congratulate the African Commission for all its noble work, in particular the campaign for the abolition of the death penalty. I would like to single out the regional conference held in Kigali, Rwanda, in September 2009, which adopted a document containing recommendations on the need to adopt an international legal instrument which we regard as of utmost importance to the defense of the right to life and dignity of individuals.

The adoption of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights by the African States was a landmark in the process of building a regional mechanism to promote and protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of the African people.

The ACHPR sessions continue to play an important role, providing us with the opportunity to evaluate the results which have been achieved, and to identify the areas where there is need to further improve the promotion and defense of human rights.

The items on this session's agenda will allow the representatives of the State Parties as well as the national and international human rights organizations and civil society organizations to exchange views in a frank and open manner on human rights issues pertaining to our continent.

Issues relevant to human rights shall be discussed, notably the human right situation in Africa, cooperation with human rights institutions and NGOs, and the evaluation of periodic reports and communications.

The communications which have been submitted reflect greater awareness of the continent's citizens of their rights and freedoms, and of the existence of a mechanism designed to protect and defend their rights.

Moreover, the periodic reports serve to gauge the fulfillment of undertakings made by State Parties aimed at implementing international instruments for the defense and protection of human rights. In terms of the African Charter, State Parties are obliged to submit periodic reports.

We hail the efforts made by a number of States aimed at fulfilling this obligation. Accordingly, we would like to take this opportunity to urge all the States to submit their periodic reports to the Commission.

Madame Chair

Ladies and Gentlemen

Socioeconomic rights remain beyond the reach of the majority of Africans. Millions of people continue to live without access to basic needs like potable water, adequate housing, food, education and primary health care. This forces States to renew efforts so that Africans may attain their socioeconomic rights.

It is my belief that we can do more to meet these challenges so as to create a continent the hallmark of which shall be the respect for human rights, socioeconomic development, and the building and

upholding of a sound and solid system designed to protect and promote human rights.

Madame Chair

Distinguished Members of the African Commission

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the Government of the Republic of Mozambique's commitment to honouring its international undertakings in the sphere of human rights.

Thus, at the level of the United Nations the government shall continue to show interest in the work carried out by the Human Rights Council by actively participating in its activities and adhering to the various human rights instruments already in place.

At the level of the African Union, the government shall continue to get involved in the activities of the ACHPR, and to ratify legal instruments.

In addition to ratifying legal instruments, the government shall continue to work towards the adoption of a domestic legal framework aimed at bringing into fruition the international legal instruments to which the Republic of Mozambique is party.

Finally, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Mozambique I would like to reiterate our commitment to continuing to work towards the promotion and protection of human rights, not only in Mozambique but in the world at large.

Thank you.