

AFRICAN UNION		UNION AFRICAINE
الاتحاد الأفريقي African Commission on Human & Peoples' Rights		UNIÃO AFRICANA Commission Africaine des Droits de l'Homme & des Peuples
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**CLOSING SPEECH DELIVERED BY
COMMISSIONER REINE ALAPINI-GANSOU ,
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN
COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES'
RIGHTS AT THE 46TH ORDINARY SESSION**

Your Excellency, Mrs. Ishatu Graham, representing the Minister of Justice of The Gambia, Mrs Marie Saine Firdaus

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen representing State Parties;

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Honourable Members of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Dear Colleagues;

Ladies and Gentlemen, Representatives of Inter-Governmental and International Organizations;

Ladies and Gentlemen representatives of International Human Rights Institutions;

Ladies and Gentlemen representatives of African and other Non-Governmental Organizations;

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To each and everyone here present in your respective capacities, all other protocols observed;

As I start my address, allow me to recall some of the events that have marked the deliberations of the 46th Ordinary Session of the ACHPR held in Banjul, the Gambia from 11th to 25th November 2009.

In the first place, there was a great deal of uncertainty surrounding the organization of our session to the extent that neither of the State Parties, nor the members of the community of NGOs, nor the partners at various levels were certain about what was actually going to happen.

It was therefore by dint of faith in the human rights of some and the determination of others to dialogue that, under all circumstances we were able to reach the end of the event. The deliberations of the 46th ordinary session of the ACHPR actually took place under optimal conditions and the participation was also satisfactory.

In this respect, I would like to express the appreciation of the Commission to the GAMBIAN Authorities, who, after the initial incidents, worked towards the success of our session.

Honourable delegates of State Parties, distinguished representatives of Civil Society, to each and everyone here present, partners from different backgrounds, you have participated in this event with a great deal of interest and warmth typical of the African people and friends of the African people. Through the quality of your interventions and analyses, you have contributed enormously to enabling the Africa Commission to highlight and adequately acknowledge the general situation of human rights on our Continent.

Many of you have had to brave all the odds surrounding the transportation system in Africa to be at the rendez-vous, “to the ritual”, I would say, for the dialogue on human rights.

On behalf of the African Commission, my colleagues and on my own behalf, I wish to thank you.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Other significant events also marked this 46th session.

- Indeed, three of our new Commissioners were sworn into office; and I wish to welcome them once again and reiterate my sincere congratulations. Allow me dear colleagues, to express the wish that you find total satisfaction in the accomplishment of your new mission, that which you hope to achieve and the necessary commitment for the well-being of our populations.

- Another significant issue is the elections through which, my dear colleagues, you decided to put your confidence in a new Bureau. On behalf of my Deputy Chairperson, and on my own behalf I wish to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the choice that you have made on our humble persons.

We assure you that we will discharge this important but enriching assignment to the best of our ability.

And so I hope that together we will continue to consolidate the progress already made both within the work of our Commission and in the context of our mission of promotion and protection of human rights and we will commit ourselves to addressing the numerous challenges which await us in the execution of our mandate.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the opening of the session, we have as usual executed a very ambitious work programme. Together with the representatives of State Parties, Civil Society activists, partners from different backgrounds, we have reviewed the human rights situation in Africa. We have noted with great concern that our populations are still exposed to a lot of dangers and these constitute threats to their security.

Indeed, very alarming situations have been of concern to us. The desire for the change of the normal constitutional order as is the case in Niger and the reaction that this may generate; the systematic refusal to take into consideration the legitimate aspirations of the Sovereign people; the serious and large-scale human rights violations in the face of all these tendencies like the case in Guinea, the persistence of armed conflicts with the resulting trail of refugees and internally displaced persons in Sudan and Somalia; sexual abuse, raping on a large-scale in North and South Kivu in the DRC; or even intolerance or denial of the right to dissent even in the countries where there is relative peace, were some of the issues which were discussed positively and at length during our session. There is also the need to point out the spectre of electoral violence which results in all kinds of suffering for the most vulnerable sections of the population.

The specific and highly critical situation of human rights defenders and Journalists in many countries, particularly in The Gambia, cannot be swept under the carpet. Moreover, The Gambia which has hosted the African Commission for the past two decades should have been a haven of peace for all human rights activists.

The situation of women and that of the girl child and more specifically the problem of maternal and reproductive health continues to constitute a matter of

concern. In this regard our Commission commends the holding of the African Conference, Beijing plus 15 here in The Gambia and supports African women in their quest for justice and equity by contributing to the recommendations which had been formulated on this occasion.

Ladies and Gentlemen; distinguished Guests,

I would like at this point of my address to also call to mind two important issues which had been raised during our deliberations and which serve as food for thought for our future meetings.

The first relates to the need to identify appropriate strategies for the improved protection of human rights on the Continent.

The second relates to the importance of implementing the trilogy Peace-Justice-and Security which our Commission has discussed with the various partners and more particularly with His Excellency the President of the AU, Dr. Jean Ping during his passage through Banjul in the context of the meetings of the Beijing plus 15 Conference.

All the speakers on these two issues agreed, on the one hand, that solutions can only be found to these two problems within the context of combined efforts and the synergy of the activities of all the stakeholders. The latter need to develop early warning, anticipative and organizational reflexes to deal with the immensity of the different forms of human rights violations. On the other hand, the effectiveness of the trilogy and its impact on human rights should necessarily integrate several factors; in particular culture, religion, socio-economic development, the political context to cite only these.

During this Session, the ACHPR, as you may have noted during the presentation of our Final Communiqué, examined, within the framework of its mission of protection, cases of human rights violations and on which it took decisions which I hope, will be implemented by the States concerned. In this manner they will contribute to the respect for the rights guaranteed by the African Charter.

What actually comes to mind during this closing session and which therefore appears essential to me is the enormity of the tasks that lie ahead of us. Our Commission as a whole is conscious of its mission to safeguard human rights and fundamental freedoms and nothing should justify its absence when major decisions and actions are required to deal with critical situations of human rights violations within its mandate. In this regard, I would like to appeal to all the bodies which have a human rights mandate, but also to leading institutions so that they will integrate the African Commission in their short, medium and long-term plans and perspectives, because as the principal institution responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights on our continent, it should play a leading role.

The ACHPR has already taken action in conformity with the spirit and content of its mandate in relation to human rights situation in Guinea, in The Gambia and in Niger, to cite only these examples. Any initiative within this context should adequately take into account what it has achieved and what it intends to do in the future.

That is to say my dear colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen that what remains to be done is even greater than what has already been accomplished.

Now that the curtain is closing on the deliberations of the 46th Session I would like to propose to each and every one that we are engaging the collective conscience on human rights problems confronting our Continent; while the majority of the citizens in our countries is still not able to get the minimum basic requirements, in terms of the right to food, to housing and decent living conditions and to exercise their fundamental rights.

Before adding my voice to yours, your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to once again congratulate all the colleagues for the work done.

I would have liked to wish you a good rest; that of the great Warrior; alas, I know better than anybody that our schedules are still very tight and the challenges

ahead are enormous ; otherwise all that remains for me is to extend to you my best wishes for the intersession.

To Madam Secretary and the entire staff of the Secretariat, we have been able to achieve our programme and this has only been possible thanks to your hard work and for this I say thank you.

To the Interpreters , the Translators and to the Drivers who, day and night guaranteed our safety, I say a big thank you.

To each and everyone of you I say a safe journey home and a big thank you.