

**47th Ordinary Session of the African Commission
on Human and Peoples' Rights,
Banjul, The Gambia, from 12 to 26 May 2010**

ADDRESS BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, MINISTER OF
JUSTICE, LEGISLATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS,
AND GOVERNMENT SPOKESPERSON ON THE OCCASION
OF MEETING OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN
AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS.

Your Excellency, Madam Chairperson of the African
Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights,

Honourable Commissioners of the African Commission,

Ladies and Gentlemen representatives of Governments,

Ladies and Gentlemen representatives of Non-
Governmental Organizations,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and pleasure for me to be able to take
the floor before this august assembly, on behalf of the
Member States of the African Union in general and on
behalf of my country, Benin, in particular, on the occasion
of the meeting of the 47th Ordinary Session on Human and
Peoples' Rights, and to take stock of the recent progress on

the implementation of the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Before proceeding I would like to extend the gratitude of the African Union Member States in general and that of Benin in particular, to the Gambian people and to its President, His Excellency YAHYA JAMMEH for the hospitality which has been accorded to us since our arrival on Gambian territory.

I would also like, at this point in my address, to seize this opportunity to present on behalf of the President of the Republic of Benin, President YAYI Boni, my sincere congratulations to Maître Reine ALAPINI GANSOU, this distinguished Amazon from Benin – previously holder of the mandate of Human Rights Defenders for the numerous educational and training activities that she has organized in Benin within the framework of her mandate – for her election to the head of the Commission, and by the same token, express the gratitude of the entire Beninese people to the Honourable Commissioners for the mark of confidence which they have placed on our compatriot.

It is evident today that human rights are at the heart of the concerns of our planet, and that Africa cannot remain sidelined in relation to this dynamic. For several centuries, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, like the other Institutions established on the Continent, has been working so that Africa can be integrated into this process and the results are quite conclusive at several levels.

The Republic of Benin, for its part, steadfast to the option of democracy and good governance that it chose since the conference of the nation's resources in 1990, undertakes on a daily basis, to carry out all the required activities for the effective implementation of the international and regional legal human rights instruments to which it is signatory.

In this context Benin submitted, at the 45th Session of the Commission in Banjul in May 2009, its consolidated Periodic Report of 2000-2008 on the programmes and policies adopted to guarantee the promotion and protection of the rights and liberties guaranteed by the Charter.

I believe that during this presentation, in which I could not personally participate due to other engagements, the dialogue had been satisfactory and the progress made by my country was adequately appreciated, as evidenced by the rich conclusions and recommendations formulated by the eminent Commissioners at the end of the deliberations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the priorities of the Government of Benin and of its Leader, President Boni YAYI is to guarantee equal access for all the citizens to basic social services and the implementation of their rights, with no discrimination whatsoever. Therefore in Benin today there is evident political will to ensure the success of the culture of human rights.

Efforts are being deployed on a daily basis to further improve the framework for the enjoyment of these rights. Thus, to mention only the recent progress registered, the Government of Benin:

1. has adopted several strategies aimed at alleviating poverty, strengthening the micro-economic framework through micro-credit policies favouring women and the youth so as to guarantee to all the right to satisfactory living conditions;
2. has embarked, with the support of its development partners, in particular the European Union and the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) on the creation of new law Courts in order to make justice accessible to the citizens. This policy is translated by the construction of new prisons and the rehabilitation of the old ones;
3. from the 1st January 2010, increased the food rations to two (2) meals per day for detainees followed by a considerable improvement in the quality of health care provided for them.

Your Excellency Madam Chairperson of the Commission,

Honourable Members of the Commission,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Republic of Benin is also carrying out several activities to improve the existing legal framework through the harmonization of the Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code currently under adoption in the National Assembly with certain relevant provisions of the Conventions being duly ratified.

With regard to the sensitization and training activities in human rights, the capacity building of several target groups, notably the locally elected, the Judges, the Teachers, the Health Officials, the NGO Heads, the Judicial Police Officers, the Prison Wardens etc...was carried out during 2009 by both the State Institutions and the Non-Governmental Organizations working in the field of promotion and protection of human rights. Thus, for a better coordination of these initiatives, the State envisages to establish a Human Rights House to serve as a reference framework for all human rights promotion and protection activities.

In the second half of October 2009 Benin received the visit of Madam Catherine DUPE ATOKI, Commissioner in the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Chairperson of the Monitoring Committee of the Robben Island Guidelines and of a delegation from the United Nations Association for the Prevention of Torture. During this mission which was essentially devoted to torture-related issues, the members of the delegation had the opportunity to appreciate, through visits to the detention and police custody centres, all the efforts which have been made to eradicate

the practices of torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment from the daily life of the Beninese people.

Benin also hosted in Cotonou from the 12th to 15th April 2010, a regional conference on the Death Penalty. This major meeting, organized by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, culminated with the adoption of a joint declaration to motivate and encourage the States to abolish the Death Penalty. At the national level, serious brainstorming is being engaged on the issue, at the decision making level, and we hope that Benin will from henceforth, be able to figure among the nations which have succeeded in abolishing this sentence. In effect, some months ago the Government brought before the National Assembly a draft law for an amendment of the Constitution pursuant to which Article 15 stipulates the abolition of the Death Penalty.

The table is not exhaustive but it should be noted that despite the will of the Beninese Government to enhance knowledge of human rights, to guarantee its effective enjoyment and respect for it at all levels, the activities still confront difficulties. Problems of a legislative, structural, organizational and material nature at times hinder the efforts deployed in the implementation of these rights.

It is for this reason that Benin is seeking all forms of assistance from the Commission to make up for the said deficiencies.

The Republic of Benin remains attached to the ideals of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and re-affirms its commitment to the work of the Commission. To achieve this it continues to welcome the country visits carried out by the Members of this Institution to obtain information about the level of implementation of the commitments undertaken by our country in becoming a State Party to the Charter.

I thank you!