

**STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE ATTORNEY GENERAL AND THE  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR JUSTICE AT THE OPENING OF THE 5TH  
EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN  
AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS**

**HELD AT JERMA BEACH HOTEL**

**BANJUL- THE GAMBIA**

**21 JULY 2008**

Chairperson of the African Commission  
Excellencies Members of the African Commission  
Executive Secretary of the African Commission  
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps  
Distinguished delegates  
The Press  
All other protocols respectfully observed

It is my honour and privilege to deliver the opening statement once again at the 5th Extraordinary Session of the African Commission On Human and Peoples' Rights.

If you recall, the Extra Ordinary Session was held in February this year in The Gambia and I was privileged to address the gathering on that important forum which was necessitated by the need to continue the work of the Commission as it relates to the completion of the review of the Commission's Rules of Procedure vis a vis the establishment of the African Court on Human Rights. I am aware that the Commission could not complete its work during the period hence the need of this meeting.

On behalf of the government and the people of the Republic of The Gambia, I would like to welcome you all once again to The Gambia and hope that you will enjoy your stay here.

Chairperson,

I have been informed that the focus of this extraordinary session is to complete the review of the Commission's Rules of Procedures, consider the decisions of Communications filed and heard by the Commission and issue concluding observations on State Reports that have been considered on previous Ordinary Sessions of the Commission among other things. Let me however hasten to say that, there is a lot that this session has to achieve under the dynamic leadership of her Excellency Commissioner Monageng but I have no doubt that she will ably chair the affairs of the meeting to a successful end and to the satisfaction of all.

Chairperson,

The promotion and protection of Human Rights in Africa is the primary responsibility of all and sundry because it is only when our human rights are guaranteed, promoted, protected and fulfilled that peace and development will be realised in the continent. We therefore need to restore more confidence in our Continent by ensuring the promotion and protection of our human rights.

Member states are obligated to submit State reports to show progress made as well as challenges and problems faced in implementing the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Complaints mechanism is also another avenue that redress can be sought for the violation or threat of violation of the rights under the Charter.

In View of these important functions of the Commission, I am hopeful that the Commission would at the conclusion of this session, issue concluding

observations on the State reports and decisions on the Communications and complete the review of the rules.

This i believ will help reduce the backlog of work to be done and also allow the Commission to have more time to execute its promotional mandate within the Continent . It will also enable them to effectively work with the Court since heads of States have approvrd the merger at the **just concluded AU Summit in Egypt. Similarly, parties to cases will be able to enjoy the fruits of their judgement within a reasonable time after their cases are concluded.**

Iam therefore confident that all the delegates will give it their best and participate fully in the deliberations because every one's contribution is very important towards ensuring that the African human rights system is fully developed, functional and effective for the benifit of the African peoples.

As member states, we have committed ourselves to this cause and we must ensure that we realise it to the end and I am sure all have this same objective.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and thank you for listening.

**MARIE SAINÉ FIRDAUS  
ATTORNEY GENERAL AND  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR JUSTICE**

