

## Concept Note

### **Celebrating 75<sup>th</sup> year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights through a decade of cooperation between the UN Special Procedures and those of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights**

**October, 25 October, 12.00-13:00, Arusha**

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#### **A. CONTEXT AND JUSTIFICATION**

On 10 December 2023, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) will turn 75. The UDHR is a milestone document in the global history of human rights, infused with values and ideals drawn from the world over. Drafted by UN representatives from diverse cultural and technical backgrounds, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations. From its inception, it has served as a conduit of the desire for a better humanity. Generations have placed faith in its promise. Nelson Mandela, while referring to the advent of apartheid occurring at the same time as the adoption of the UDHR said “the simple and noble words of the UDHR were a sudden ray of hope at one of our darkest moments” ... “and proof that were not alone”.

Although most African countries were under colonisation at the time of its adoption, the relevance of the UDHR in the promotion, protection and enjoyment of human and peoples' rights on the continent is beyond dispute. This relevance has been clearly translated in the preamble of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights which states “ *Reaffirming* the pledge they solemnly made in Article 2 of the said Charter (OAU Charter) to eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa, to coordinate and intensify their cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa and to promote international cooperation having due regard to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”.

Subsequent provisions enshrined in the African Charter, its protocols as well as other human rights instruments adopted by the African Union are undoubtedly inspired from the UDHR. In addition to instruments adopted and ratified at continental level, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) is not only interpreting the Charter in line with the letter and the spirit of the UDHR but has also developed a series of standards and principles in line with international instruments which are consistent with the UDHR.

The UDHR and the African Charter are the foundation instruments which govern the work of the UN special procedures and those of the ACHPR. These international

and regional mechanisms have since 2012 formed an alliance via the Addis Ababa Roadmap whereby they committed to increase cooperation and joint work, thus reinforcing the complementarity of the international and regional standards they apply in their work.

In the past ten years, the work of the Roadmap has often been quoted in many different fora, as one of the success stories, a blueprint, of cooperation between the international and regional human rights systems. Such cooperation, which has manifested itself in many forms, including joint statements, press releases, joint field visits, joint thematic activities and participation in the respective sessions and events, has also contributed to show the path towards a future defined by the interconnected nature of the challenges and solutions, driving at coordinated, international and regional ecosystems approaches.

This Roadmap has also demonstrated that stronger, efficient, well-resourced and collaborative and coordinated international and regional human rights mechanisms are key.

Strengthening collaboration between international and the African regional human rights mechanisms is especially relevant as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), a flagship project of the African Union's Agenda 2063, is entering its implementation phase. The AfCFTA envisages the creation of a single market with the free movement of goods, services, capital and natural persons, to boost intra-regional trade and promote and attain social and economic development in the continent. As of August 2023, the Agreement has been signed by 54 African Union Member States and ratified by 47 Member States. Trading under the AfCFTA officially started on 1 January 2021 and since October 2022, eight countries participate in the Guided Trade Initiative which seeks to facilitate trade while testing their operational, institutional, legal, and trade policy environment to trade under the AfCFTA.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) jointly with the Economic Commission for Africa and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Geneva published an [ex-ante human rights impact assessment of the AfCFTA](#) in 2017. Since then, OHCHR and its partners have actively disseminated the recommendations from the assessment, advocating with AU Member States, National Human Rights Institutions, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), civil society organizations, private sector, and other stakeholders for the inclusion of human rights in the implementation of the AfCFTA. These efforts have contributed to the adoption, on 7 March 2023, of a resolution by the African Commission on a ['Human Rights-Based approach to the Implementation and Monitoring of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement'](#) ACHPR/Res.551 (LXXIV). This resolution provides further opportunities for collaboration between OHCHR, Special procedures mandate-holders, the African Union, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and Member States in monitoring the human rights risks and

opportunities providing support to States to ensure an inclusive and human rights-respectful implementation of the AfCFTA.

It is in this context that this panel is jointly organised by the UN special procedures mechanisms and the African Commission in order to revitalize their cooperation by recommitting to the UDHR and African Charter. This panel is also part of a year-long celebration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UDHR, led by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which will culminate on 10 December 2023.

## **B. DATE AND PLACE**

The panel will take place on during the Commission 77th ordinary session.

## **C. GENERAL OBJECTIVES**

The main objective of the panel is to use the opportunity of this celebration to highlight the collective work done by the UN special procedures and those of the African Commission with the goal to promote the values and rights contained in the UDHR and the African Charter, to face the current challenges and identify collectively the way forward.

In addition, the panel aims to:

**REFLECT:** on what has been achieved as regard the collaboration between the UN special procedures and those of the African Commission that the Addis Ababa Roadmap has spearheaded with the goal to promote the values and rights of the UNDHR and African Charter.

**PROMOTE:** the UDHR as a critical milestone for human rights and highlight what it means for African people in their everyday life;

**REFLECT:** on areas of further collaboration between the UN special procedures and those of the African Commission in the context of the Addis Ababa Roadmap, to monitor human rights impacts of the AfCFTA and assist Member States in a human rights-respectful implementation.

**ENGAGE:** international and regional mechanisms, civil society and all other actors to express commitment to the promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights in the continent.

## **D. MODALITIES**

- Time:
- Panel discussion
- Interaction with participants and Concluding remarks

## **E. PROGRAMME**

**12:00–12:05** Opening Remarks by the Moderator: **Hon. Commissioner Janet Ramatoulie Sallah-Njie**, *Vice-Chairperson and Special Rapporteur on the rights of women in Africa*

**12–05: 12: 10** **Hon. Commissioner Maya Sahli-Fadel**, former Commissioner and former Member of the Joint Working Group of the Roadmap- *how are the UDHR and the African Charter, still relevant to face the current challenges in respecting and promoting human rights? (5 minutes)*;

**12:10– 12:15** **Mr. Clément Voulé**, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association; Member of the Joint Working Group of the Roadmap- *How has the enhanced collaboration between the UN special procedures and those of the African Commission through the Addis Ababa Roadmap contributed to promoting the values and rights of the UDHR and African Charter? (5 minutes)*;

**12.15– 12:20** **Mr. Marcel Akpovo**, Regional representative for the East Africa Regional Office of the OHCHR -*OHCHR's support to Human Rights Integration in the design and implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement and its Protocols (5 minutes)*

**12.20– 12:25** **Ms. Janice Kimaro**, Coordinator, East African Women in Business Platform (EAWiBP)- *Drawing lessons from the EAC Regional Trade experience for the AfCFTA implementation, (5 minutes)*

**12:25–12:55** Interaction with participants *(30 minutes)*

**12:55–13:00** Concluding remarks by **Hon. Commissioner Remy Ngoy Lumbu**, *President of the ACHPR and Member of the Joint Working Group of the Roadmap (5 minutes)*