Final Communique of the 25th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

Bujumbura, Burundi
26 April – 5 May 1999

1. At the invitation of the Government of the Republic of Burundi, the 25th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights was held from 26 April – 5 May 1999 in Bujumbura, Burundi.

2. The opening ceremony took place on 26 April 1999, under the chairmanship of Mr. Youssoupha Ndiaye, Chairman of the African Commission.

3. The Session was opened by the 1st Vice President of the Republic of Burundi, His Excellency, Mr. Frédéric BAMVUGINYUMVIRA.

4. Speeches were also made by:
   - Dr. Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, Deputy Minister of Justice of the Republic of South Africa, in her capacity as Representative of the Delegates present at the Session; and
   - Mr. Mohammed Monieb of the Arab Organisation for Human Rights, on behalf of the Non-Governmental Organisations.

5. The Secretary General of the Organisation of African (OAU) addressed the African Commission on 27 April 1999, in the presence of States delegates, National Human Rights Institutions, and Human Rights Non-Governmental Organisations. In his speech, Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim congratulated the Government of Burundi for its efforts in hosting this Session. These efforts are an indication of the country’s firm desire to commit itself to the path of democratisation and respect for human rights. He also recalled the African States’ undertaking, in the Grand Baie Declaration and Plan of Action, adopted in Mauritius on 16 April 1999, at the 1st Ministerial Conference on Human Rights in Africa, to promote and protect human rights. He also called on African States to ensure quick ratification of the additional protocol creating the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Finally, Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim reiterated the need to evaluate the structure and functioning of the Secretariat of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, to strengthen this organ and enable it fulfil its mission in a satisfactory manner.

6. The African Commission deliberated on the state of its relations with Non-Governmental Human Rights Organisations. It deplored the lack of co-operation on the part of some of them: indeed, of the 231 NGOs with observer status, only 25 regularly submit their biennial activity reports to the Secretariat of the Commission. The Commission adopted new criteria for the granting of and enjoying observer status.

7. Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, and South Africa presented their initial reports, in accordance with article 62 of the Charter. The examination of Seychelles’ initial report was deferred to the 26th Ordinary Session. The Commission deplored the fact that this State did not send any delegates to present its initial report. Mali submitted its initial report.
8. The States delegates made presentations to the Commission on the human rights situation in their respective countries.

9. Various NGOs expressed their concern regarding the deterioration of the human rights situation in certain parts of the continent. These violations include extra-judicial, summary and arbitrary executions, arbitrary arrests and detentions, inhuman conditions of imprisonment and detention, restrictions to the freedoms of expression, movement and association, military coups d’état, forced disappearances, violations against women and children in countries engaged in armed conflict. The NGOs also condemned the coups d’état which took place in Niger and Comoros.

10. All the members of the Commission presented reports on their activities during the inter-session period. The Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa, the Special Rapporteur on Extra-judicial, Summary and Arbitrary Executions, and the Special Rapporteur on Prisons and Conditions of Detention in Africa also presented their reports.

11. The Chairman of the Commission informed all participants that two States, Senegal and Burkina Faso, had ratified the Additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the creation of the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights. Consequently, the Commission decided to take appropriate measures with a view to the expeditious ratification of the said Protocol.

12. The working group on the draft Protocol on Women’s Rights presented its report to the Commission, which took due note of it.

13. As part of its promotion activities, the Commission decided to organise a series of seminars and conferences.

14. During its closed sessions, the Commission was seized of 81 communications, about 60 of which were examined.

15. The Commission adopted seven resolutions.


17. The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights expresses its appreciation for the ongoing efforts for peace and national reconstruction in Burundi. The Commission thanks the Burundian Government and People for the warm welcome and fraternal hospitality extended to it, which contributed to the success of its proceedings.

18. The Session was declared closed on 5 May 1999 by the First Vice President of the Republic of Burundi, His Excellency, Mr. Frédéric BAMVUGINYUMVIRA.

19. The Chairman of the Commission held a press conference following the closing ceremony.
Done at Bujumbura, Burundi
5 May 1999