Final Communique of the 27th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

1. At the invitation of His Excellency Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria, Current Chairman of the Organisation of African Unity, the 27th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights was held, from 27 April – 11 May 2000, in Algiers, Algeria, under the Chairmanship of Professor Emmanuel Victor Oware Dankwa, Chairman of the Commission.

2. The following members were in attendance at the Session:
   - Chairperson Emmanuel V.O. Dankwa,
   - Vice Chairperson Julienne Ondziel-Gnelenga,
   - Commissioner Isaac Nguema,
   - Commissioner Hatem Ben Salem,
   - Commissioner Kamel Rezag-Bara,
   - Commissioner Nyameko Barney Pityana,
   - Commissioner Andrew Chigovera,
   - Commissioner Vera M. Chirwa, and
   - Commissioner Jainaba Johm.

3. The Session was declared open by His Excellency Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika. In his speech, President Bouteflika welcomed the progress recorded by African States, by the African Commission and by the NGO community in the field of the promotion and protection of human rights on the continent.

   The Current Chairman of the OAU also highlighted the existence of many conflicts on the continent and their negative impact on the protection of human rights. According to him, the world economic order has largely contributed to the marginalisation of African countries. He urged States Parties, NGOs and the African Commission to engage in concerted efforts aimed at the establishment of a democracy founded on the rule of law, justice and equality.

   Algeria which, as he recalled, is emerging from a painful period in its history, has committed itself to build an authentic democratic order, founded on the rule of law, on respect for its profound identity, and on the characteristic wisdom of its people. He concluded by reiterating to the Commission his warm welcome to Algeria and assuring it of Algeria’s full cooperation.

4. Speeches were also delivered by the following speakers:
   - Chairman E.V.O. Dankwa;
   - Mr. Mohammed Genedy, Vice-Chairman of the Arab Human Rights Organisation, on behalf of the NGO Community;
   - His Excellency Mr. Jean de Dieu Mucyo, Rwandan Minister of Justice and Institutional Relations, in his capacity as Representative of the delegations of States Parties;
   - Mr. Said Djinnit, Assistant Secretary General of the OAU in charge of Polical Affairs, representing the Secretary General of the OAU.

5. The Commission heard statements made by States Delegates, representatives of National Human Rights Institutions and NGOs.
6. The NGOs participating at the 27th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights expressed their concern regarding the human rights situation in certain African countries.

Featuring prominently among the violations mentioned by the NGOs are the recurrence of armed conflicts, with their disastrous consequences for civilian populations, unconstitutional changes of government, the use of fire arms against pacific demonstrators, the practice of torture, extra-judicial, summary and arbitrary executions, inhuman conditions of imprisonment, restrictions on the freedoms of expression, movement and association, forced disappearances and other forms of violations whose victims are most often the most vulnerable strata in society: women, children, the persons with disability and the elderly.

7. Violations committed against human rights defenders, and the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of these violations were also considered by the Commission.

8. The Commission discussed its participation at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and other Related Forms of Intolerance, which is to be held in August 2001, in South Africa. It decided to get actively involved in preparations for the conference, in particular through the African Preparatory Conference, to be held in Dakar, Senegal.

9. The following National Institutions were granted affiliate status with the Commission:
- National Human Rights Commission of Rwanda,
- National Human Rights Commission of Malawi,
- L’Observatoire National des Droits de l’Homme d’Algérie.

10. The African Commission granted observer status to the following NGOs:
- La Ligue Djiboutienne des Droits de l’Homme,
- Le Collectif des Associations et ONG Féminines du Burundi,
- L’Association Tunisienne des Droits de l’Enfant,
- Alliances for Africa,

11. In accordance with article 62 of the Charter, Uganda, Burundi and Swaziland presented their initial reports, while Rwanda and Libya presented their periodic reports. Consideration of Ghana’s periodic report was deferred to the 28th Ordinary Session. Egypt, Benin and Namibia submitted their reports. The Commission will consider them at its next Ordinary Session.

12. All members of the Commission presented their activity reports for the last inter-session period. The Special Rapporteur on Women’s Rights 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.

13. The Commission expressed its satisfaction at the ratification by Senegal, Burkina Faso and The Gambia of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Creation of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, and urged other States Parties to ratify this important legal instrument as soon as possible, while also committing itself to persist in its sensitisation campaign aimed at speeding up the ratification of the said Protocol.
14. As part of its promotion activities, the Commission decided to organise seminars on the following topics:
- Contemporary forms of slavery.
- The right to education and development.
- Freedom of movement and asylum rights in Africa.
- The rights of persons with disability in Africa.
- Economic, social and cultural rights in Africa.
- Freedom of expression in Africa.

15. During its closed sessions, the Commission was seized of 69 communications out of which 53 were considered.

16. The Commission adopted resolutions on:
- the Peace Process in the Democratic Republic of Congo,
- Western Sahara, and
- the peace and national reconciliation process in Somalia.

17. The African Commission welcomes the massive participation at its 27th Session, by 26 States Parties, 7 National Human Rights Institutions and nearly 60 African and international human rights NGOs, which is a testimony to the growing interest of its partners in the promotion and protection of human rights in Africa.

18. The African Commission welcomes the holding in Algiers, under the auspices of His Excellency Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria, Current Chairman of the Organisation of African Unity, of the Summit on the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo on 30 April 2000.

The Commission expresses its deepest appreciation for the laudable and untiring efforts of the Current Chairman of the OAU, H.E. Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika for the restoration of peace, the rule of law and democratic principles in the Great Lakes region in particular and on the African continent in general.

19. During the course of the session, the Commission was granted audience by His Excellency the Head of the Government of the Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria.

20. The African Commission expresses its sincere gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria, Current Chairman of the OAU. This gratitude is also extended to the Government and People of Algeria for their warm welcome and the authentically African hospitality, which contributed to the smooth conduct and success of its deliberations.

21. The Government of Benin confirmed its invitation to the African Commission to hold its 28th Ordinary Session in Cotonou. The Commission expressed its gratitude to the Government of Benin, accepted the invitation, and decided to hold the said Session from 23 October to 6 November 2000 in that country.

22. The Session was declared closed on 11 May 2000 by H. E. the Honourable Minister of National Solidarity, representing H. E. the Head of Government of the Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria.
23. The Chairman of the Commission gave a Press Conference following the closing ceremony.

Done at Algiers, 11 May 2000