

**FINAL COMMUNIQUE OF THE 32<sup>nd</sup> ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS**

**OCTOBER 17-23, 2002 BANJUL, THE GAMBIA.**

The 32<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights was held in Banjul, The Gambia, from October 17- 23, 2002 under the Chairmanship of Mr. Kamel Rezag Bara.

The Following Commissioners attended the Sessions:

Commissioner Jainaba Johm, Vice Chairperson

Commissioner Ibrahim Ali Badawi El Sheikh

Commissioner Hatem Ben Salem

Commissioner Andrew Ranganayi Chigovera

Commissioner Yassir Sid Ahmad El-Hassan

Commissioner Angela Melo

Commissioner Salimata Sawadogo.

Before the start of the Opening Ceremony, Mr. Germain Baricako, Secretary to the African Commission, invited participants to observe a minute of silence in memory of the victims of the "Joola" disaster, which occurred on September 26th, 2002.

In his statement, the Chairman of the African Commission on Human and peoples' Rights, Mr. Kamel Rezag Bara, welcomed the participants and expressed his happiness at the increasing number of State Parties, National Human Rights Institutions, Non-governmental Organisations as well as other parties attending the Sessions of the African Commission.

Mr. Rezag Bara then presented the activities carried out by the Commission during the inter-session, including several missions undertaken in the State Parties by the Commissioners and Special Rapporteurs.

He further stressed the need to strengthen the system of human rights in Africa and urged all the actors to ensure the entry into force of the Protocol to the African Court on Human and peoples' Rights and the completion of the preparation of the Draft Protocol on Women's Rights in Africa.

Recalling the Resolution of the 38<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union requesting the African Commission to reflect on ways and means of strengthening the African System for the promotion and protection of human rights with a view to adapting it to the perspectives of the African Union, the Chairman of the Commission spoke of the progress achieved by the Commission, and also of the difficulties it encountered in the discharged of its mandate.

Statements were made by Honourable Mr. Jean de Dieu Mucyo, Minister of Justice of Rwanda on behalf of the delegates of the State Parties, and Mr. Gnondoli Komi and Mr. Mohamed Genedy, representing National Human Rights Institutions and Non-Governmental Organisations respectively.

The Session was officially opened by the Honourable, Mr. Ousman Badjie, Minister of the Interior, on behalf of the Vice President of the Republic of The Gambia. In his opening statement, Honourable Badjie welcomed the participants to the session and recalled the tragedy that had just befallen The Gambia and Senegal following the Joola ferry disaster. He spoke also of the ongoing conflict in Cote d'Ivoire and prayed that a quick solution is found.

Turning to the commitment of the Republic of The Gambia, with regard to the construction of the headquarters of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Honourable Badjie invited the Commission to join the Government of The Gambia in looking for ways and means of honouring this commitment.

Several delegates of State Parties, representatives of National Human Rights Institutions, Non-Governmental Organisations and other invited guests made statements.

Representatives of National Human Rights Institutions and Non-Governmental Organisations expressed their serious concern with regard to the situation of human and peoples' rights prevailing in many African states, in particular Cote d'Ivoire. Member States also exercised their right of reply.

The African Commission granted affiliate status to the following National Human Rights Institutions:

The South African Human Rights Commission and

The National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria.

The Commission granted Observer Status to the following Non Governmental Organisations:

Community Law and Development Centre of South Africa

Malawi Centre for Advice, Research and Education on Rights of Malawi

Association pour les Droits de l'Homme en Milieu Carceral du Congo Brazzaville

Human Rights Trust of Southern Africa of Zimbabwe

ONG KOJESKI of D.R.Congo

Child Rights Watch of Sudan

Sudan National Committee on Traditional Practices of Sudan

Institute for Democracy in South Africa of South Africa

Centre for Rights and Development of Seychelles

West Africa Network for Peace Building of Ghana

SOS Femmes of Mauritius

Equality Now- African Regional Office of Kenya.

On 21<sup>st</sup> October 2002, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights celebrated the African Human Rights Day through various activities, including a seminar on the theme: NEPAD, Good Governance and Human Rights.

The African Commission considered twenty-one (21) communications, twelve (12) of which were considered for seizure, five (5) for admissibility and four (4) on merit. Consideration of the ten (10) other communications were deferred to the 33<sup>rd</sup> Session for reasons of lack of time.

The African Commission was pleased with the large attendance of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session. There were twenty-two state Parties represented by thirty-nine (39) delegates, six (6) National Institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights with a total of eleven (11) representatives, one hundred and five (105) African and International NGOs, with one hundred and eighteen (118) participants and forty-eight (48) other guest, bringing the total to two hundred and sixteen (216) participants.

The Commission considered and adopted the concluding Observations of the Initial Reports of Mauritania, Cameroon and Lesotho and the Periodic Report of Togo.

The Commission further considered and adopted a Resolution on Guidelines and Measures for the Prohibition and Prevention Measures of Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Punishment or Treatment in Africa (Robben Island Guidelines)

The Commission also considered and adopted the Draft Declaration on the Principles of the Freedom of Expression in Africa.

The Commission adopted the report of the 31<sup>st</sup> Ordinary Session.

The African Commission wishes to express its sincere gratitude to the Government of The Gambia for the facilities put at its disposal, which contributed to the smooth running of the proceedings of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session. The Commission had an audience with the Vice-President of The Gambia.

The African Commission decided to hold its 33<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Session in Niamey, Niger, from May 5<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> 2003 on the invitation of the Government of the Government of Niger.

The 32<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary session was closed by Honourable Joseph Joof, Attorney General and Minister for Justice and National Assembly Matters of the Republic of The Gambia on 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2002.

The Chairman of the Commission held a press conference after the closing Ceremony.

**Done in Banjul on October 23rd, 2002.**