Great honour to be here today and take part in your 30 year celebrations in the presence of the (11) Commissioners of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (chairperson Ms Pansy Tlakula).

I'm glad to celebrate with all of you 30 years of active engagement of the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights established to promote and protect human and people’s rights, including interpretation of the African Charter. This is a great achievement and something that Africa can be proud of.

Being here today is also the culmination of several days of AU-EU human rights discussions.

We greatly value our Dialogue on human rights with the African Union because we have deep appreciation of our relationship with your organisation and with your continent.

The EU and the AU share the view that good governance, human rights and the rule of law are a driving force for development and an essential part of realizing the full potential of any given society.

Since the Commission was established, the continent has adopted regional treaties on the human rights of women, on the rights and welfare of children and on internal displacement to name a few.

In addition, over the years the Commission has established very rich human rights jurisprudence through its communication procedure and through the State reporting mechanism. In so doing, it has set up a constructive dialogue with African States on the promotion and protection of human rights.
• The special mechanisms of the Commission have also enormously contributed to set standards and adopt regulations and policies on major thematic human rights issues on the continent, including on indigenous issues, the rights of women, refugees, internally displaced persons, asylum seekers and migrants. This is all the more remarkable as these achievements have taken place at times under very difficult conditions, including lack of human and financial resources as well as varying levels of cooperation from Member States.

• The Commission has also endeavoured to actively engage with NGOs and National Human Rights Institutions. The number of international organisations, NGOs and other interest groups attending the sessions of the Commission has increased considerably over the years. This is also a great achievement.

• While no State has a "perfect" human rights record, there is a fundamental difference between States who have minimum safeguards in place to ensure that their imperfections cannot be swept under the carpet, and those who have not. The Litmus test is not "perfection", but whether credible institutions - that can help reveal and address violations - are allowed to exist and function unhindered; institutions such as independent judiciaries, a free and pluralistic media, open parliaments, national human rights institutions, and civil society.

• Human rights are not a romantic concept; they represent the solution and not the problem. In fact, history has shown us that human rights violations are often the precursor to conflict. There is much evidence which confirms that respect for human rights, the promotion of inclusive and democratic societies and support to a vibrant civil society is the only way to guarantee sustainable security, stability and prosperity.

• There are many who believe that human rights are a desperate undertaking. However, the ambitions of this continent guided by this
commission have shown how the protection of human rights is key. There are many examples of good practices and success stories being carried out in places around the world that can and should be shared across the globe.

- We have worked closely together for 30 years in mutual support. It's clear to me on behalf of the EU that the synergy that we have today is stronger than never. We stand ready to build on this and take on together the challenge of ensuring that human rights remain at the core of the development of our continents.