

MEDIA ADVISORY

Sixth (6th) African Union Commission (AUC) and Network of Africa National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) Policy Dialogue

INVITATION TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MEDIA

What: The Sixth African Union Commission (AUC) and Network of Africa National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) Policy Dialogue on “*National Human Rights Institutions Championing a Human Rights-Based Approach in Accelerating the Implementation of the AfCFTA*”.

When: 15-17 May 2023 starting at 9:00 am

Where: African Union Commission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Who: The Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) of the African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with the Network of Africa National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI).

Why: Inaugurated in 2017, the Annual Policy Forum on the State of the National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in Africa is a joint initiative by the African Union Commission (AUC) Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), the African Union (AU) Permanent Representatives Committee (AU-PRC), and the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI), supported by like-minded partners and stakeholders. The Forum is institutionalised as an annual platform aimed at fostering dialogue among key actors towards strategic collaborations and insights that inform policy decisions and lead to actionable steps with regard to implementation of human rights commitments in Africa. The Policy Forum is convened within the context of the AU Human Rights Decade, declared by the AU Heads of State and Government in 2016. The Decade, operationalised by the AU Strategic Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Africa (2022-2031), intends to inculcate a culture of human and peoples’ rights in Africa, including strengthening.

The year 2023 marks the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Paris Principles by the UN General Assembly and the 42nd anniversary of the adoption of the African Charter. As such, the first day of the 2023 Policy Forum will be dedicated to taking stock of the status of African NHRIs, including a reflection on the achievements and challenges faced towards full compliance with the Paris Principles. Reflections will also be held on the need to fast track the establishment of NHRIs where they don’t exist in accordance with the provisions of the African Charter; as well as to assess and forge a way forward regarding the operational challenges faced by Paris Principles compliant NHRIs.

In addition, as the Africa prepares to commemorate the 60th anniversary of establishment of the Organization of African Unity on 25 May 2023, the AU Assembly of the Heads of State and Government at its 35th Ordinary Session held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia adopted “Acceleration of AfCFTA Implementation” as the AU theme of the Year 2023. The AfCFTA is one of the flagship projects under the AU Agenda 2063 and a symbol of the African Renaissance, focusing on economic renewal of Africa. It is a long-term development strategy for transforming the continent into a global powerhouse, covering trade in goods and services, investment, intellectual property rights and competition policy. The AfCFTA envisages the creation of a single market with free movement of goods, services, capital and natural persons, as a way of promoting social and economic development in Africa. Adopted by the 10th Extraordinary Session of the Heads of State Assembly in Kigali Rwanda on 21st March 2018, AfCFTA entered into force on 30th May 2019 and trading under the AfCFTA started officially on 1 January 2021. The AfCFTA has been so far signed by 54 and ratified by 46 AU Member States respectively. In contrast, the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment has so far been ratified by 4 Member States only.

Objectives: The main objective of the Policy Forum is on one hand to advocate for the establishment and sustenance of strong NHRIs, and on the other hand, to create a platform for enhancing interactions and engagements between NHRIs and AU, including its relevant organs, in particular the PRC, PAPS, the Department of Economic Development, Trade, Industry, Mining (ETIM), the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, the AfCFTA Secretariat, and RECs, towards improved monitoring and identifying potential human rights impacts of AfCFTA, in addition to reinforcing compliance and adherence to human rights standards. Specifically, the Policy Forum is intended to:

- a) Provide a platform for engagement between NHRIs and AU Organs, including PRC to reflect in the status of NHRIs in Africa;
- b) Create awareness about AfCFTA and its potential human rights implications through the human rights-based approach to development lens, focusing on the intersecting trade, social and environmental impacts;
- c) Strengthen the capacity of regional and national human rights actors to engage and contribute to an inclusive and equitable AfCFTA and identify mechanisms through which these actors can engage and meaningfully contribute to ensuring that the implementation of AfCFTA is human rights compliant;
- d) Interrogate the interlinkages between free movement of goods and services and free movement of persons in Africa, with deep reflections on the status of the AU Protocol on Free Movement of Persons; and
- e) Provide a platform for the official launch of the NANHRI Baseline Assessment and Stakeholder Mapping of National Human Rights Institutions’ and Other Actors’ Involvement in African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) processes, the Guiding Framework on Mainstreaming Human Rights in the AfCFTA Processes; and IHRDA Study and Toolkit on the Role of Human Rights Defenders in Mainstreaming Human Rights in AfCFTA Processes.

Expected Outcome:

This Forum is expected to contribute to the improved capacity of NHRIs and AU policy organs to influence implementation of regional human rights commitments within the context of the theme of the year and the AU Human Rights Decade.

Participants:

Members of the AU Permanent Representative Committee of the AU Member States, Representatives from National Human Rights Institutions, AUC Departments: PAPS, Economic Development, Tourism, Trade, Industry, Mining (ETTİM), AU Organs: ACERWC, African Court, ECOSCOCC, APRM, AUDA-NEPAD; The AfCFTA Secretariat; Human Rights Defenders and African Civil Society Organizations Networks, Relevant United Nations bodies, Academics; Representatives of selected Affected Groups/Right holders; Development partners; and Members of the Media.

Media representatives are invited to attend and cover the Sixth African Union Commission (AUC) and Network of Africa National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) Policy Dialogue

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