

19TH AU-EU HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE

24-25 JANUARY 2024

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

AU HEADQUARTERS

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

1. The 19th African Union (AU) - European Union (EU) Human Rights Dialogue was held on 24-25 January 2024 at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Dialogue was co-chaired by H.E. Amb. Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, and H.E. Mr. Eamon Gilmore, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights.
2. The AU-EU Human Rights Dialogue builds on the joint commitments taken at the 6th AU-EU Summit, held in Brussels on 17-18 February 2022, and the 11th EU-AU Commission to Commission meeting, held in Brussels on 28 November 2022. At the Summit, AU and EU leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights for all, to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and the respect for democratic principles, good governance, and the rule of law. It also builds on the 18th AU-EU Human Rights Dialogue that took place on 4 May 2023.
3. Since the 6th EU-Africa Ministerial Troika Meeting in Vienna, and the 7th meeting in Brazzaville, the AU-EU Human Rights Dialogue has served as a platform for exchanging experiences and addressing human rights, democracy, and legal issues in both Africa and Europe. Every Dialogue looks at current priorities and concerns for both sides of the AU-EU Partnership. This year the Dialogue was aligned on the AU Theme of the Year 2024 and took place under the theme ***Safeguarding the Right to Education in Africa and Europe*** taking into consideration the role of education in promoting the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to help people prevent conflict from occurring, resolve conflicts peacefully, or create conditions for peace as well as stand up for their human rights.
4. The AU and the EU recognized this High-Level Human Rights Dialogue as a clear manifestation of a strategic partnership of equals, rooted in shared values and common interests and guided by a long-term vision. The Dialogue proved once again to be a unique platform to update one another on the situation of human rights in respective continents and with a focus on specific country situations, share experiences, exchange points of view, and strengthen cooperation on specific human rights issues, including right to education and the right to development.

5. The African Union and the European Union emphasized the importance of ensuring universal access to quality and inclusive education as a fundamental human right. This reflects their commitment to promoting and protecting human rights, as well as their recognition of education as a fundamental enabler of individual empowerment, social progress, and economic development. These discussions are essential for the future development of joint initiatives, policies, and programmes aimed at advancing the right to education across Africa and Europe. By working together to promote human rights, peace and education, both regions will contribute to a more peaceful, prosperous, and equitable world.
6. The AU and the EU representatives acknowledged that safeguarding the right to education is crucial for the well-being and development of individuals and societies in both Africa and Europe. Both regions face their own challenges in ensuring this right. Safeguarding the right to education requires investment in educational infrastructure, teacher training, and the development of inclusive and equitable education systems. The two sides also stressed that the right to education can be enjoyed only if accompanied by academic freedom in the education sector and agreed to explore cooperation in this field. The AU and the EU discussed their respective efforts to improve access to education for girls and marginalized groups and to address disparities in educational outcomes for migrant and minority communities.
7. The EU welcomed the positive trend of abolition of the death penalty in Africa and the efforts towards the adoption of the draft additional protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the abolition of the death penalty in Africa. The AU and EU welcomed the event co-organised by the EU and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights to mark the 21st World Day against the Death Penalty, which took place on 10 October 2023 in Addis Ababa.
8. The AU and EU discussed respective stances on the right to development and agreed to continue inclusive discussions on the matter. Both sides agreed on the importance of ensuring that any legally binding instrument on the right to development is fully consistent with international human rights law. The AU extended an invitation to the EU to participate in a side event on the right to development on the margins of the 55th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.
9. The AU and EU discussed the global state of democracy and challenges to democracy in Africa and Europe more specifically. Both parties recognized the importance of the organization of credible elections to counter democratic backsliding and the key role played by international election observers to assess the quality of electoral processes, including voicing concerns where relevant. The need for continued coordination of AU and EU election observation efforts were noted, as was the need to enhance the work on the follow-up of election observation recommendations to strengthen national electoral frameworks. Underlining the importance of working with the broader international election observation community, the EU expressed appreciation of the discussions that took place in the context of the Declaration of Principles meeting in Addis Ababa in November 2023. The EU acknowledged the AU's interest to observe the 2024 European elections and expressed its willingness to facilitate contacts between the AU and the EU Member States in this regard.
10. The AU and the EU acknowledged the importance of upholding human rights in conflict and post-conflict environments, noting the need to better protect children

in armed conflicts. They welcomed the adoption of the UN Security Council resolution 2719 (2023) on the Financing of African Union-led Peace Support Operations. In this context, they highlighted the importance of continuing implementing the AU Compliance and Accountability framework in a sustainable way, noting the progress of the AU-EU-UN project towards enhancing its operationalization. The EU and the AU agreed to raise awareness around the framework through visibility activities. The AU and the EU concurred on the need to enhance respect for international humanitarian law and welcomed the establishment of the African Humanitarian Agency.

11. The AU and the EU discussed progress on the business and human rights agenda, including legislative developments in the EU on corporate sustainability due diligence based on international standards. Both sides committed to strengthen work together in this field in view of operationalizing the UN guiding principles on business and human rights and contributing to the adoption of the draft African Business and Human Rights Policy. The EU congratulated the AU for successfully holding the second Africa Business and Human Rights Forum on 5-7 September 2023 in Addis Ababa and the AU welcomed the EU's participation in the Forum. Both organizations agree that it is important to accelerate the pace of implementation of the business and human rights agenda to prevent business-related harms and promote accountability of businesses in Africa and Europe.
12. On Transitional Justice Processes, the AU and the EU discussed the implementation of their respective transitional justice policies. They encouraged progress on transitional justice and criminal accountability at national level, and assessed how it could be supported. The EU and the AU welcomed the joint launch of the EU-funded "Initiative for Transitional Justice in Africa" in October 2023 in Addis Ababa and agreed to hold the fourth edition of the joint expert workshop on transitional justice in the first semester of 2024. The AU and EU reiterated their commitment to promoting the fight against impunity.
13. The AU and the EU commended the key role of civil society in the AU-EU Human Rights Dialogue and welcomed the joint event on civic space and the protection of human rights defenders organized on the margins of the Dialogue. Both sides expressed concerns about the global shrinking of civic space, commended the work of civil society and human rights defenders on both continents, and stressed the critical importance of preserving a safe, free and open space for their programmes and activities.
14. The AU and the EU agreed on the importance of having regular exchanges, at both political and technical levels, to facilitate the implementation of the commitments made during the Dialogue and provide input to AU-EU high-level meetings. The AU and the EU agreed to hold the 20th edition of the Dialogue at the beginning of 2025 in Brussels.

Done in Addis Ababa on 25 January 2024