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**STATEMENT BY H.E. BANKOLE ADEOYE**

**COMMISSIONER FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS, PEACE AND SECURITY**

**AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**ON THE OCCASION OF**

**THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 31<sup>ST</sup> WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY**

**3 MAY 2024**

As we commemorate the 31<sup>st</sup> World Press Freedom Day, the African Union Commission joins the international community to commemorate the 2024 International World Press Freedom Day. The theme of this 31<sup>st</sup> anniversary, "**A Press for the Planet: Journalism in the face of the environmental crisis,**" emphasizes the indispensable role of a free and independent press in illuminating the challenges of the global environmental crisis that are intrinsically linked to our pursuit of peace and prosperity in Africa.

Press freedom is important, as enshrined in Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which guarantees everyone the right to receive information and express and disseminate their opinions within the law. This essential human right is also echoed in the principles of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance, which, in Article 2, Paragraph 10, specifically advocates for the free flow of information and transparent governance.

I wish to reiterate the Commission's commitment to fostering a safe and enabling environment for journalists and media workers. Recognizing the unique challenges journalists face in Africa, including those reporting on environmental topics, the Commission calls upon the African Union member states to diligently prevent and protect against crimes targeting journalists and ensure accountability through prompt, thorough,

and impartial investigations. Our commitment has been supported by the establishment and extensive work of the Mechanism of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information under the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Furthermore, I wish to underscore that the AU advocates for policies that support freedom of expression and scientific research as critical pathways to combating misinformation and fostering a well-informed public capable of participating in democratic processes and responding to environmental challenges. To that end, media diversity and plurality are encouraged, especially in uplifting regional, local, indigenous, and community media, so that all voices, including those from the most vulnerable communities, are heard.

The governance of digital platforms is also crucial in promoting a framework that aligns with international human rights standards and furthers transparency and accountability of technology companies. This approach is vital in ensuring that these platforms contribute constructively to the public discourse on environmental and other serious issues facing the continent and the world.

On this World Press Freedom Day, the African Union Commission joins others in celebrating the journalists who contend with various challenges to report truthfully and uphold the public interest, and sometimes paying the ultimate price. In solidarity with the courageous men and women of the Press, we recommit to the principles of freedom of expression and access to information as we observe World Press Freedom Day.