



STATEMENT ON THE LAUNCH OF THE CAMPAIGN IN THE LEAD-UP TO THE 70th ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Addis Ababa, 10 December 2017: Today, the African Union joins the United Nations as it embarks on a year-long campaign in the lead-up to the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 2018. The Universal Declaration, which affirms the universality, inalienability and indivisibility of all fundamental rights and freedoms, remains, to this day, one of the world most influential texts on human rights.

The rights and principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration have helped shape, guide and inspire the drafting of various documents adopted by regional, continental and national bodies, including the African Charter on Human and People's Rights in 1981, which provided for a single human rights instrument guaranteeing civil and political, economic, social and cultural, and collective rights in Africa.

The advancement of human and people's rights is a core priority of the African Union. In its commitment at realising this objective, the African Union adopted a five-year (2011-2016) Human Rights Strategy in conformity with the objectives of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other relevant instruments. The Strategy addressed the challenges of the African human rights system, in order to ensure the effective promotion and protection of human and peoples rights on the continent. In an effort to enhance women's rights and gender equality on the continent, the African Union devoted 2016 to the promotion of human rights in general and the rights of women in particular, while 2017 is dedicated to the rights of the Youth. In July 2015, the African Union Assembly declared 2017-2026 as "the Human and People's Rights Decade", and is in the process of adopting its Ten Year Human Rights Action Plan.

The recent reports of African migrants being auctioned as slaves in Libya have shaken, saddened, and angered the continent and many outside Africa. The African Union has therefore called for an immediate end to these practices and other criminal acts of human trafficking, initiated an investigation into these acts, with the view to bringing their authors to account, and taken steps to facilitate the repatriation to their countries of origin or resettlement in third countries of those willing to leave Libya.

The following African Human Rights organs, namely the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, the African Court on Human and People's Rights, and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, together with other African Union organs with a

mandate on promoting and protecting human rights, have the potential to offer victims of human rights violations in Africa avenues for redress and need to be reinforced.

In conclusion, the African Union Commission seizes this opportunity to call on all the Member States of the United Nations and African Union to renew their commitment and take all the necessary measures to ensure the effective implementation of existing norms and standards at the international, continental, regional and national levels, and the realization of human and peoples rights, without any distinction or discrimination.