

African Union



**OPENING STATEMENT BY
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COMMISSIONER FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS, PEACE AND SECURITY
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**AT THE HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
PALAIS DES NATIONS – GENEVA**

Room XXV, Palais des Nations, 13:15-14:30

28 FEBRUARY 2024

Your Excellency Mr. Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Your Excellency Amb. Abiodun Richards Adejola, Permanent Representative of Nigeria, Chairperson of the African Group in Geneva

Your Excellencies, African Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives in Geneva.

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and Members of the Diplomatic Corp;

Honorable representative of AU Organs and Institutions;

Distinguished representatives of the CSOs, Media and Academia;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

- I bring you warm greetings from the African Union Commission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. I also wish to warmly welcome you and to appreciate your presence at this High-Level Consultation on the Right to Development, taking place on the margin of the 55th Session of the Human Rights Council here at the Palais Des Nations, under the theme “***The Right to Development - Fundamental to Realizing the Africa We Want***”.
- Let me begin by thanking the United Nations Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR) for partnering with the African Union Commission in facilitating this timely and important event, which is to enhance the nexus between Human Rights, Development in Africa. I also would like to thank the African Group of Ambassadors and the AU Permanent Observer Mission in Geneva for their unweaving support to make this event a success.

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- As we proceed collectively to promote and protect human and peoples’ rights in Africa and Globally, we must realize the current challenges faced by our beloved continent. This requires us to focus our eyes on how best to advance rights that address underdevelopment, poverty, inequality, marginalization and exclusion as we make concerted efforts towards effective implementation of Agenda 2063.
- Beyond pursuing our noble agenda for greater enjoyment of civil rights and political liberties, we have to redouble our efforts to ensure that the African people enjoy the right to food, the right to safe water

and sanitation, the right to health, the right to housing, the right to education, the right to decent clothing, the right to clean environment as part of our efforts to promote the right to development.

- The African continent has witnessed decades of numerous human rights challenges resulting from a diverse range of factors, which include, among others, war, poverty, corruption, autocratic governance and exclusion of marginalized groups. It is against this background that our Heads of State and Government solemnly resolved to promote and safeguard freedom, justice, equality and human dignity by reiterating their commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights obligations in Africa.

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen

- As we are making efforts to promote the Right to Development in Africa, special focus must be made to Right to Food Security. As you may recall, in 2019, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Biennial Review Report findings show that, out of the forty-five (45) Member States that reported progress, only seven (7) were on the track to reducing stunting growth among the children in line with the target of ten (10) percent. The agreed target was to reduce children underweight to five percent, out of the thirty-three (33) Member States only eight (8) countries are on track on this indicator. Based on this trend, most African Union member states are unlikely to reach the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods by 2025.
- Malnutrition leads to decreased social and economic development, thereby becoming a critical human right, political, social, and

economic development issue and this was highlighted by the findings of the Cost of Hunger in Africa (COHA) study, conducted in 21 Member States. These findings reveal that African Member States are losing the equivalent of between 1.9 and 16.5 percent of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) due to child undernutrition. It is also estimated that malnourished children are at risk of losing more than 10 percent of their lifetime earning potential.

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- The ongoing war in Ukraine uncovered the reality about our African food system, which is poor and weak despite the vast fertile land and water that we have on the continent. In addition to the foregoing, the current security trends on the continent significantly affected food security through loss of access to means of production and massive displacement of population. Furthermore, the impact of climate change has exposed and aggravated the weakness and vulnerabilities of Africa's food and health systems.
- These current trends call for urgent actions to ensure that all Africans' right to food is guaranteed to unlock their full potential to contribute effectively to the realization of a united, prosperous and peaceful Africa. This also highlights the importance and the timeliness of this Consultation that calls for reflections and clear recommendations on the need to realize the Right to Development for the African Peoples as stated in article 22 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights in Africa.
- This alarming food insecurity situation in the continent calls for our collective wisdom and reveals that the realization of the "Africa We Want" as stated in Agenda 2063 is premised on the understanding that to eradicate poverty and build shared prosperity we must have

a high standard of living, quality of life, sound health, and well-being through modernizing agricultural systems to ensure collective food security and the provision of basic services including health, nutrition, education, shelter, water, and sanitation, in line with the principles of the Right to Development.

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and gentlemen,

With these few remarks, I am convinced that this High-Level Consultation on the Rights to Development in Africa will contribute to strengthening the efforts of the African Union to implement AU Agenda 2063, the blueprint for building the Africa we Want and the Africa we Deserve.

I wish us all fruitful deliberation.

I thank you.