

**Hon. Commissioner Dr Solomon Solomon Ayele Derso –  
Chairperson, African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights  
(ACHPR)**

**Hon . Commission Remy Lungu Ngoy, Vice Chair**

**Madam Lindiwe acting secretary of the commission**

**Victoria Maloka representing Madam Prudence Mgwanya - Acting  
Director, Directorate of Women, Gender and Youth - African Union Commission**

**Honorable Clement N. Voule – United Nations Special Rapporteur on  
the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association –**

**Hon. Reine Alapini-Gansou, former chair and Special rapporteur on  
HRDs**

**Hon. Justice Solomy Bossa – Vice Chair, ACDHRS Governing  
Council –**

**Mr. Gilbert Sebihogo – Executive Director, Network of African  
National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) –**

**Mrs Hannah Forster, ED of ACDHRS**

**Members of the Steering Committee of the NGO forum**

**Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,**

I would like first of all to congratulate Hon Solomon Ayele Derso, for his re-election as Commissioner of the African Commission and thanking him for joining us today! It is my great pleasure to speak today on behalf of the steering committee of the NGO forum.

In preparation for the 68<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Commission last April, we drew the attention of the African Commission to the rising trends in conflicts, violence, and systematic restrictions on fundamental freedoms on our continent.

We also predicted that extensions of presidential term limits, which citizens across the continent have peacefully protested, are also

impediments to the safeguarding of sound checks and balances on executive power and are reflective of the democratic backsliding.

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Today, **the same cause always produces the same effect**, and the same effect never arises but from the same cause. The inaction of the African Union when leaders refuse to relinquish power by amending the constitution and obstruct democratic change is a contributing factor to many coup d'état in Africa and human rights violations in Africa.

The illegitimate becomes legitimate, and this is the current situation in Guinea, Chad, Sudan and Mali. This forum should formulate adequate recommendation to unconstitutional behaviours especially when it comes to amending constitutions for personal gains.

In October 2020, the Nigerian security forces, and government officials repressed a peaceful protest of the #ENDSARS movement with no accountability measures in response to police brutality and killings.

Today as we speak, there is a massive dissention and targeting of opinion leaders including actions threatening their life and assets.

Whoever dares to speak up against impunity, corruption, and human rights abuses prevalent in Nigeria are systematically repressed, arrested and targeted. Many have to flee their country.

This forum should clearly express its concern on the rising harassment and allegations of torment of human rights defenders (HRDs), their family members, and legitimate political opponents in Nigeria by both state and non-state actors.

**In other parts of the continent, there are also numerous reports of increased weaponization of laws to restrict fundamental freedoms to HRDs, Journalists and opinion leaders, especially in Algeria, Chad, Angola, Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan Egypt, Uganda (where 54 NGOs were deregistered), and Zimbabwe.**

In the same vein, peaceful assembly has been a challenge state security responded with disproportionate use of force in eSWATINI, Chad, and Tunisia. States continue to respond to these protests with brutality, repression, arrests and judicial harassment.

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The level of atrocities committed on the continent recently is unprecedented.

It is indeed absurd that the African Union, whose headquarters are in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and where declaration of commitment to Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020 was made, is facing an ultra-violent conflict under the watch and inaction of the AU Peace and Security Council. It is unacceptable that atrocities, including rape and sexual assault, executions, displacement and the destruction of hospitals, farms and food stores are committed on a soil where the African Union is hosted.

Numerous other atrocities are being committed currently in Nigeria, Sudan, DRC, Cameroon, Mozambique, Libya, and this requires an urgent and immediate action of this forum.

It is just that in our deliberations we reflect on how the African Union should commit to have a fully functional peaceful prevention and conflicts resolution mechanism including a regime of strong sanctions.

I hope these three days will help us to reflect deeply on issues to be brought before the commission for their deliberation.

I thank you