



Civil Society Organisations and National Human Rights Institutions call for more transparency and announce new initiatives on the nomination and selection of members of human rights mechanisms in Africa

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Civil society organisations and National Human Rights Institutions engaging with the African Union (AU) human rights mechanisms call for greater transparency in the nominations and selection of its members, and a more inclusive and participatory process. This call is especially applicable to the July 2024 elections to fill three vacancies at the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights.

The undersigned organisations acknowledge that the Executive Council of the African Union, during its 44th Ordinary Session, voted to re-elect Hon. Hermine Kembo Takam Gatsing as a member of the African Committee on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Committee). While congratulating Hon. Hermine Kembo Takam Gatsing on her re-election, future nomination and election processes must be strengthened for transparency and broader participation.

The Committee, established by the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Child Rights Charter), consists of 11 independent experts nominated by State Parties and elected for a term of five years, renewable once. State Parties to the African Child Rights Charter may nominate nationals of State Parties as candidates for vacant seats. In the current round, only Hon. Hermine Kembo Takam Gatsing was nominated.

Similarly, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Charter) and the Protocol to the Charter establishing an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Court Protocol) provide for the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Court), consisting of 11 Commissioners and 11 Judges, respectively. The States Parties to these treaties may also nominate candidates of high moral standing, integrity, impartiality and competence in human rights. To kick-start the nomination process, the Office of the Legal Counsel of the African Union solicits nominees at least six months before the elections and communicates all nominees to the Assembly of Heads of State and Government at least two months before the elections.

The next election of members of an African Union human rights mechanism will be for the African Court. As it is about six months ahead of these elections, the undersigned organisations have launched an initiative to facilitate more meaningful civil society engagement in the process.

This initiative will also serve as a foundation to establish a long-term strategy and modalities concerning subsequent vacancies. The initiative derives from the extensive work of the Coalition for an Effective African Court and other civil society led engagements focused more broadly on the effectiveness of the AU human rights mechanisms. In addition, this initiative aims to bring the activities of the AU closer to African citizens and other rights holders on the continent.

By July 2024, three upcoming vacancies at the African Court need to be filled. Judge Ben Kioko (Kenya) completes his second term and should be replaced by a male judge from East Africa. Judge Blaise Tchikaya (Republic of Congo) and Judge Stella Isibhakhomen Anukam (Nigeria) are ending their first terms and are eligible for reelection. State Parties to the Court Protocol may however nominate other candidates for these two positions: a male from the AU's Central African region, and a female from the West African region.

We urge the Office of the Legal Counsel to circulate the call for nominations timely and broadly, including through social media. In addition, we urge State Parties to develop, publish and operationalise processes for engaging with and partnering with civil society in identifying, vetting and nominating candidates to the African Court.

To join the initiative, complete the form [here](#) and learn more about the upcoming vacancies at the African Court [here](#).

Signatories

African Defenders

Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria

Centre for Rights Education and Awareness

Coalition for an Effective African Court on Human and People's Rights

Defend Defenders

Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa

Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa

International Service for Human Rights

Pan African Lawyers Union

Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights

Synergia - Initiatives for Human Rights

The Network of African National Human Rights Institutions