AU-EU Joint Communiqué on the 21st Human Rights Dialogue

24 November 2026

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) held their 21st Human Rights Dialogue on 24 November 2026 at the Headquarters of the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in a hybrid format. H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, and H.E. Ilze Brands Kehris, EU Special Representative for Human Rights, co-chaired the Dialogue, with the participation of H.E. Javier Niño Pérez, Ambassador of the EU to the AU, and Hon. Idrissa Sow, Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). The AU delegation included the ACHPR, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) and relevant Departments of the AU Commission; the EU delegation comprised representatives of the European External Action Service, the European Commission, the EU Delegation to the AU and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA).

2. The Meeting recalled the endorsement of the Human Rights Dialogue in the Joint Declaration of the 7th AU–EU Summit (Luanda, Angola, 24–25 November 2025).

3. Building on the Joint Declaration, the Joint Vision for 2030 and the 20th Dialogue (Brussels, 7 October 2025), the AU and the EU reaffirmed that the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of all human rights, guide their cooperation, with civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights, and the right to development receiving equal attention. They acknowledged the major human rights milestones commemorated since the 20th Dialogue, including the 40th anniversary of the entry into force of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the 35th anniversary of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the 20th anniversary of the operationalization of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the 25th anniversary of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

4. Reviewing the follow-up to the 20th Dialogue, both sides exchanged views on human rights in conflict and post-conflict situations, election observation and democratic participation, and the death penalty. They welcomed the decisions of the AU Peace and Security Council of 21 August 2026 to designate AU PSC–ACHPR focal points and to institutionalize the "One AU" approach through a biennial meeting between the AU PSC and AU organs with human rights mandates. They underlined the importance of implementing the judgments of competent courts, in their respective jurisdictions, and following up on the recommendations of human rights mechanisms as essential to their effectiveness and welcomed the AU's engagement with Member States through the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) Sub-Committee on Human Rights, Democracy and Governance and the related exchange of experience with the EU.

5. The co-chairs welcomed the joint field visit of 23 November 2026 to the Don Bosco Children Center in Addis Ababa, an EU-supported project for reintegrating children experiencing social exclusion and homelessness. They noted that voluntary outreach, education, vocational training with a pathway into employment, family reunification, childcare, safe water and sanitation and accessible facilities give practical meaning to economic, social and cultural rights. In line with the AU Theme of the Year 2026 on sustainable water and safe sanitation, they recognized the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation and agreed to promote participation, non-discrimination, affordability and accessible grievance mechanisms with particular attention to women and girls, recalling the ACHPR Human Rights Guidelines on Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation (2019).

6. Recognizing the 40th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Right to Development, and taking into account Article 22 of the African Charter and ACHPR Resolution 586, the EU took note of the outcomes of the commemorative Conference held at AU Headquarters on 4–6 November 2026. Both sides agreed to cooperate on implementing the right to development, including participation, equitable benefit-sharing, access to remedy, responsible investment and international cooperation on financing, technology and capacity.

7. On business and human rights, the EU welcomed the advancement of the draft AU Principles and Guidelines on Business and Human Rights and the growing number of National Action Plans in AU Member States, the ACHPR State Reporting Guidelines and Principles on Articles 21 and 24 of the African Charter relating to Extractive Industries, Human Rights and the Environment, and the Continental Forum on Business and Human Rights convened by the ACHPR in May 2026. The AU welcomed developments in the EU's regulatory framework, including the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive and the Forced Labour Regulation (applicable from December 2027). Both sides agreed to strengthening implementation of the UN Guiding Principles, and to supporting National Action Plans, community consultation and effective remedies, as well as structured technical exchange on due diligence and its implications. Both sides underlined the need for accountability of multinational enterprises, including technology companies, and took note of civil society's call for affected communities, civil society organizations and human rights defenders to participate in the due diligence and monitoring of investments, including under Global Gateway.

8. The AU and the EU discussed the opportunities and risks of digital transformation, including artificial intelligence, data protection, surveillance, internet shutdowns, hate speech, disinformation and information manipulation, and the need for accountability of technology companies. They agreed that responses must safeguard freedom of expression, media freedom and access to information. They welcomed initiatives of both institutions to promote human-centric and rights-based digital governance, and they committed to continued collaboration in these areas, including in global processes on artificial intelligence governance and the implementation of the Global Digital Compact. The AU and the EU agreed to improve coordination on election observation, inclusive democratic participation and electoral integrity, including follow-up of recommendations and the greater inclusion of women and young people in observation missions. They noted the growing impact of online manipulation on electoral processes and the need to protect freedom of expression and privacy. They also noted the human rights implication of the increasing use of new technologies such as AI, drones and autonomous weapons in conflict situations.

9. On human rights in conflict and post-conflict situations, the EU welcomed the AU PSC decision to make human rights compliance frameworks mandatory in all AU-mandated or authorized Peace Support Operations. Both sides underlined the importance of the AU

Compliance and Accountability Framework for Peace Support Operations in its 2027–2030 phase and continued EU support, including through the AU–EU–UN tripartite partnership, and recalled UN Security Council Resolution 2719 (2023). They agreed that the thematic area of Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC) should be part of operational training for AUPSOs. They expressed concern about the impact of the increasing use of drones in armed conflict on civilians, particularly women and children. They stressed the need for the protection of civilians and essential civilian infrastructure, such as water and sanitation services and marketplaces, as well as humanitarian access and the safety of humanitarian personnel, in accordance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

10. The AU and the EU welcomed the integration of human rights into early warning and the AU's support to National Human Rights Institutions, civil society organizations and national peace infrastructures, including through the development of human rights indicators. The EU took note of the joint AU Commission–ACHPR fact-finding mission on Sudan, undertaken at the request of the AU PSC, and its reports, and both sides expressed concern about grave violations, including conflict-related sexual violence, and underlined the importance of documentation and the preservation of evidence for accountability, fight against impunity and survivor-centred support. They welcomed support to national transitional justice processes, commended the results of the EU-funded Initiative for Transitional Justice in Africa, including the AU-EU Transitional Justice Seminar. They welcomed progress on victim-centered approach, including the establishment of national victim support centres, and looked forward to the second phase of the Initiative. The AU announced its plan to inaugurate a human rights memorial near AU Headquarters in January 2027. Both sides agreed on the importance of accountability for international crimes and reiterated their joint commitment to the Rome Statute and the International Criminal Court.

11. The AU and the EU agreed to strengthen the protection of children affected by armed conflict, building on the work of the ACERWC and the AU Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflict. This includes monitoring and reporting grave violations and the reintegration of children formerly associated with armed forces and groups, as well as ensuring safe schools and education in emergencies, and closer coordination on prevention, early warning, monitoring and accountability in conflict situations. The EU welcomed the appointment of the first AU Special Envoy on Children Affected by Armed Conflict.

12. The AU and the EU reaffirmed commitment to gender equality, the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, including conflict-related sexual violence and technology-facilitated violence, and the full and equal enjoyment of rights by all women and girls, including through UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the Maputo Protocol and the AU Convention on Ending Violence against Women and Girls, supporting ratification, survivor-centred services, access to justice and women's leadership. They welcomed the recommendations presented by the ACHPR Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa and agreed to further consider them at technical level.

13. Recalling that non-discrimination is necessary for the enjoyment of all human rights by all, the AU and the EU reaffirmed commitment to equality and non-discrimination on the grounds recognized by relevant regional human rights instruments. They welcomed African leadership on the rights of persons with disabilities and agreed to promote inclusion, accessibility and access to justice. They discussed combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance on both continents, recalling the 25th anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

14. They acknowledged the enduring legacy of the transatlantic slave trade, slavery and colonialism, and the EU took note of the AU's agenda on reparatory justice for Africans and people of African descent. The EU presented the findings of the research conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights on the experiences of people of African descent in the EU, and both sides underlined the importance of equality data, reporting and access to remedies. On the death penalty, both sides noted the progress made by a number of African States towards abolition, supported continued engagement with national authorities and encouraged continued efforts towards adoption of the draft Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Abolition of the Death Penalty in Africa.

15. The AU and the EU welcomed the recommendations of the AU-EU Civil Society Seminar, held in Addis Ababa on 19–20 November 2026, presented by representatives of CSO from Africa and Europe. They reaffirmed the essential role of civil society, human rights defenders and journalists, and expressed concern about shrinking civic space on both continents. The AU and EU agreed to strengthen their protection, provide feedback on the recommendations taken forward, and promote an enabling environment for civil society, including sustained participation between Dialogues and the balanced representation of women and young people. They welcomed civil society's offer to submit an action plan to both institutions. They also agreed to enhance coordination in the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly where common positions can be identified.

16. To translate their commitments into results, the AU and the EU agreed to pursue the following joint initiatives and to track their progress:

    i. Facilitate a structured exchange and experience sharing on implementing decisions of human rights mechanisms, involving relevant African and European institutions;

    ii. Support technical exchange on business and human rights, including the development and implementation of National Action Plans and the application of due diligence requirements;

    iii. Continuing exchanges on human rights in conflict and post-conflict settings, covering human rights and early warning, joint multilateral initiatives, transitional justice, compliance and accountability, child protection and survivor-centred responses;

    iv. Identify possible engagements on digital rights and democratic participation, while safeguarding freedom of expression and media freedom, and collaboration in global processes on artificial intelligence governance and the implementation of the Global Digital Compact;

    v. Identify opportunities for joint public communication on AU-EU common human rights priority issues on the margins of the UNGA;

    vi. Prepare with the civil society a joint opinion article on the impact of drones on civilians in conflict situations, for simultaneous publication in African and European media; and

    vii. Consider at technical level the recommendations of the ACHPR Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa, including support to the ratification and domestication of the AU Convention on Ending Violence against Women and Girls;

17. They agreed that Technical focal points will hold regular intersessional exchanges, review progress and prepare a consolidated progress report for the 22nd Dialogue.

18. The AU and the EU reaffirmed the value of the Dialogue as a platform for frank exchange, mutual learning and joint action between equal partners. They confirmed that, as an integral

part of the new follow-up mechanism agreed at the AU–EU Senior Officials Meeting in November 2026, the reports and recommendations of the Dialogue will feed into high-level political decision-making bodies of the AU-EU partnership. They agreed that the 22nd AU–EU Human Rights Dialogue will be held in Brussels, Belgium, in 2027, on dates to be agreed through diplomatic channels.

Done in Addis Ababa on 24 November 2026

H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye
Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security
African Union Commission

H.E. Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris
European Union Special Representative
for Human Rights