CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY



**Statement by Michael Addo**

## Member of Joint Working Group of the Addis Ababa Roadmap and of the UN Working Group on business and human rights

**Workshop on regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights**

**Geneva, 4 and 5 October 2016**

Distinguished delegates,

Representatives of regional human rights mechanisms

Esteemed colleagues,

Dear participants, colleagues and friends,

## I am honoured to have the opportunity to address this workshop not only as a member of one of the UN special procedures mechanisms, namely the Working Group on business and human rights, but also as member of the Joint Working Group established to oversee the implementation of the Addis Ababa Roadmap, the framework guiding the cooperation between the special procedures of the UN Human Rights Council and those of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights.

First of all, perhaps I should say a brief word about the Addis Ababa Roadmap for the benefit of the few colleagues who may be less familiar with this particular cooperation arrangement. In recognition of the similarities of objectives and working methods as well as the impetus and opportunities for joint and collaborative work, the special procedures of the Human Rights Council and those of the African Commission met in Addis Ababa in 2012 to agree terms of cooperation through a Roadmap of activities.

The Addis Ababa Roadmap as it has now come to be known aims to strengthen collaboration and synergies between the UN special procedures mechanisms and the African Commission. It encourages special procedures mechanisms of the two systems to conduct joint activities including country visits, systematically exchange information on upcoming events relevant to the African region, and strengthen the follow-up to recommendations, amongst others. The Roadmap also established a Joint Working Group composed of representatives of both systems with a mandate to oversee the implementation of the Roadmap.

We are delighted to note that the Addis Ababa Roadmap has often been quoted in many different fora, [including this one], as one of the success stories of cooperation between the international and regional human rights systems.

Following the review foreseen in the Roadmap which took place in Luanda in 2014 where both systems re-affirmed their commitment to the objectives of the roadmap, implementation of the Roadmap has steadily continued with a number of activities ranging from regular exchange of information, to more sophisticated activities, such as joint country visits and joint thematic work. A number of joint statements have been issued by relevant special procedures mandate-holders of the Human Rights Council and the Commission. Conferences and seminars have been organized in which relevant special procedures mandate-holders of both systems participated. An increasing number of joint initiatives with a thematic focus have also taken place, including on child marriage, women human rights defenders, the right to life, and businesses and human rights, amongst others. Of note in terms of thematic collaboration is the work jointly undertaken by the former UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Mr. Heyns, and his counterpart in the African Commission the Working Group on the death penalty and extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary killings in Africa on the right to life. This particular initiative led to the development of a general comment on this right as guaranteed in the African Charter. Another important event which hopefully was the first of a sustained collaboration was the African Girl Summit on ending child marriage. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights which was tasked to lead the session on the impact of legal reform on the elimination of child marriage brought together to discuss this important issue the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, the UN Special Rapporteur on slavery, the Special Rapporteur on women’s rights of the African Commission and the Special Rapporteur on child marriage of the African Committee on the Welfare of the Child.

The UN special procedures mandate holders have continued to discuss among themselves the status of the implementation of the Roadmap and some of these discussions highlighted the added-value of their interactions and cooperation with the African human rights mechanisms, and indicated the importance of continuing this framework of cooperation.

In addition the two systems have set aside time to reflect on the status of the Roadmap implementation and ways and means of improving it and to do better every year. The most recent reflection took place between the delegation of UN special procedures and Commissioners during the 57th ordinary session of the Commission in 2015. At that meeting, representatives of both systems reiterated their commitment to take further the kind of rich thematic exchanges that have already begun within the framework of the Roadmap. Steps were proposed to advance the organisation and steering provided by the Joint Working Group.

Moreover, interest has been expressed from an increasing number of UN mechanisms—including many who have previously not been engaged with the African Commission—as well as by Commissioners themselves, to develop new thematic collaborations, and to use the Roadmap as their guide. An interesting model/form of cooperation was the group of experts appointed by the Human Rights Council to examine the human rights situation in Burundi. This group was composed of two UN Special Rapporteurs and one African Commissioner. This shows that the roadmap provides a meeting point, from which AU experts can be invited to join UN projects/investigations (and, vice versa, UN experts can be invited to join AU projects/investigations). Another means foreseen in the Roadmap and which deserve further exploration is country based collaboration. While the African system does not have country “rapporteurs” per se, it is important to take advantage of the fact that individual commissioners are each responsible for a small group of countries, and have valuable experience to share.

The implementation of the Addis Ababa Roadmap was never meant to be a walk in the park and so, understandably there have been some challenges and the experts of both systems are very conscious of these whilst still remaining committed to continue implementing the Roadmap. First and foremost, neither of the two systems has dedicated resources for the Roadmap implementation and unfortunately there has not been any progress on this front since the last workshop in 2014. The two systems could together approach donors for fundraising purposes, but this takes time and resources. Communications and strategic planning could also be further improved particularly around country visits for providing more targeted inputs in relation to each system’s recommendations that the other system could follow up if relevant.

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This year (2016) is a particularly important year for those working in each system. In Africa, 2016 marks the African Year of Human Rights with a particular focus on women’s rights. At the UN we have commemorate fifty years since the passing of the two International Covenants, on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The intersection of these two celebrations must provide a foundation upon which to build thematic collaborations across the whole range of human rights.

As independent experts appointed to monitor the human rights situation and advise Governments on the implementation of their obligations, our commitment to rights-holders must remain unwavering so that all individuals can live in peace and security, and enjoy their human rights without impunity for violators. By uniting our strengths at the national, regional and international levels, we can strive to accelerate efforts towards achieving these goals for the benefit of the many rights-holders who have clear entitlements to freedom from fear and want.

I thank you for your attention and I look forward to a constructive dialogue during this workshop.