



Opening Remarks by H.E. Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa,

Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission

at the

**Solemn Ceremony for the Opening of the 2025 Judicial Year of the African Court
on Human and Peoples' Rights**

3 February 2025

- His Excellency José Maria Pereira Neves, President of the Republic of Cabo Verde and Guest of Honour
- Hon. Lady Justice Imani D. Aboud, President of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights
- Ministers of Justice and your representatives
- Your Lordships and Your Ladyships Chief Justices of African Union Member States
- Excellencies Members of the Permanent Representatives Committee to the African Union
- Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners accredited to the United Republic of Tanzania
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning.

It is with profound honour that I address you today on behalf of the African Union Commission, on the occasion of the Opening of the 2025 Judicial Year of the African

Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. The Court's chosen theme, "*Advancing Justice through Reparations*," echoes the theme of the African Union that is, "*Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations*," and both are very timely and significant. The themes underscore our collective commitment to ensuring that justice is not a distant concept but a lived reality for all Africans.

Before I proceed, I would like to convey warm greetings and best wishes from His Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. He extends his unwavering support for your efforts to advance justice and acknowledges the pivotal role the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights plays in ensuring that justice prevails across the continent. Let me also recognise and appreciate the commitment of His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Cabo Verde for gracing this solemn ceremony as Guest of Honour. His Excellency's unwavering support to the African Union and its institutions have been consistent and we salute your leadership.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we engage this theme today, I am reminded of my remarks at the Accra Reparations Conference in November 2023. There, I emphasised that the demand for reparations is not an attempt to rewrite history or perpetuate a cycle of victimisation. Rather, it is a call to confront the undeniable truths of our past and take meaningful steps to correct the enduring wrongs that have profoundly affected Africans and African societies.

This spirit of reparative justice was a central tenet in the African Union's decision to adopt the 2025 theme, "*Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations*," during the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in February 2024, Addis Ababa. The Assembly laid out clear directives in the *Decision on Building a United Front to Advance the Cause of Justice and the Payment of Reparations to Africans*, outlining specific actions and aspirations for advancing reparatory justice for African nations and people of African descent.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In line with these commitments, it is and will be encouraging to see reparations emerging as a critical component of the African Union's broader agenda for racial healing, equity, and justice.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

The Solemn Ceremony for the Opening of the Judicial Year 2025, alongside the Judicial Seminar under the theme "Rendering Justice for Women through Reparations" scheduled for tomorrow 4 February 2025, is a clear demonstration of the African Court's resolute commitment to advancing reparatory justice. These initiatives reflect the Court's critical role in providing legal clarity and effective pathways for the implementation of reparations. The African Union Commission remains available to support these efforts and to work closely with the African Court on reparative justice strategies.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we celebrate and engage with the African Court in the coming days, let us be mindful that our presence here today signals our ongoing unity in purpose and our collective commitment to building a world that is just, equitable, and free from the chains of historical subjugation that have constrained Africa for too long. Together, we are forging a new path—one that honours the past, seeks justice in the present, and paves the way for a brighter future for Africa and the world at large.

Let us embrace our role as the architects of this new era—an era where justice, equity, and racial healing are not just aspirations but concrete and actionable realities.

I call upon each of us to reaffirm our commitment to these principles and to work tirelessly toward a future in which no African, nor any human being, is denied the dignity and justice they rightfully deserve.

Before I close, I must take this opportunity to congratulate my sister, Lady Justice Imani Aboud on her successful tenure as President of the Court. In her, I have enjoyed true

sisterhood, one that carried through each time we needed each other for support. I wish her all the success in her future endeavours.

I thank you for your attention.