For immediate release.

Contacts: Ronke Adekunle: +234 8023395917
Nobuntu Mbelle: +227 22990553

AFRICAN COURT JUDGES MUST ADDRESS IMPUNITY IN AFRICA.


The inauguration of the Court and their first meeting comes at a time, when the African continent is bedeviled with the problem of impunity and the challenge of establishing accountable government founded on law and justice. These have led to series of severe conflicts that have resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of valuable African lives and a high incidence of gross human rights violations.

It is the wish and desire of Africans and friends of Africa the world over that the new Judges would waste no time in taking steps that would enable them play their rightful part in creating a new order on the continent where respect for fundamental rights and freedoms becomes the basis of government.

“As they get down to business, the judges of the African Court must focus on stemming the tide of impunity and widespread gross human rights violations that currently afflict our continent,” says Ibrahima Kane of Interights (a London based human rights non-governmental organization and member of the Coalition).

Ms Ronke Adekunle, of Alliances for Africa (an international human rights NGO) and head of the Coalition’s Communications Unit, says that, “this day heralds a new dawn in Africa. The Coalition fervently hopes that members of this august body would strive to live up to the demands of their high office by ensuring that they discharge their responsibilities efficiently and effectively and in such a manner that would bring succour and restitution to the numerous victims of human rights abuses in Africa.”

“Today signposts a new beginning in the battle to enthrone a culture of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms on the continent and we shall all support the judges to ensure they keep the promise which this day represents in the life of all Africans.” says Chidi Odinkalu, Senior Legal Officer, Africa Programme, Open Society Justice Initiative.

In extending its hands of fellowship and co-operation to the new judges, the Coalition restates its commitment to continue in its avowed tradition of working assiduously towards ensuring that the new court is both vibrant and effective in the discharge of its functions.

The Coalition offers to place at the disposal of the Court, the support of civil society in and outside Africa in a partnership to rid the continent of the prevalence of gross human rights violations and the culture of impunity.

The Coalition urges all human rights defenders and non-governmental organizations across Africa to take full advantage of the existence of this new court in their work to turn Africa into a place where fundamental rights and freedoms are both respected and defended.

The newly sworn in Judges of the Court and their terms of office are:

1) Ms. Sophia A.B. Akufo - Ghanaian (2 year term)
2) Mr. Hamdi Faraj Fanoush – Libyan (4 year term)
3) Mr. Modibo Tounty Guindo – Malian (6 year term)
4) Mr. El-Hadji Guisse – Senegalese (4 year term)
5) Mr. George W. Kanyeihamba – Ugandan (2 year term)
6) Mrs. Kelello Justina Mafoso-Guni – Basotho (4 year term)
7) Mr. Jean Mutshinzi – Rwandese (6 year term)
8) Mr. Bernard Ngoepe - South African (2 year term)
9) Mr. Gerard Niyougeko – Burundian (6 year term)
10) Mr. Fatsah Ouguergouz – Algeria (4 year term)
11) Mr. Jean Emile Somda – Burkinabe (2 year term)

The Coalition for the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights includes over 500 leading African and international NGOs and expert human rights institutions. Established in 2003, the Coalition works to ensure the establishment of effective African regional courts and tribunals in Africa.

See full text of the submission on www.africancourtcoalition.org