

**PRESS RELEASE No 121/2003****THE PROTOCOL ON THE AFRICAN COURT ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS TO COME INTO FORCE SOON**

The Union of Comoros today became the 15th Member State of the African Union to deposit the instrument of ratification of the Protocol relating to the establishment of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights with Prof. Alpha Oumar Konaré, the Chairperson of the AU Commission.

With the deposit of the instrument by the Union of Comoros, the majority of ratifications required for the entry into force of the Protocol on the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights has been fulfilled. In accordance with its Article 34 (3), the Protocol shall enter into force thirty days after the deposit of the 15th instrument of ratification, namely, 25th January 2004.

Upon receipt of the instrument, Prof. Alpha Oumar Konaré, underscored the importance of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights as a key organ of the African Union. He noted that respect for human rights, democratic governance, transparency and popular participation, were among the bedrock of values and standards on which the Constitutive Act of the African Union was founded. He appealed to AU Member States, which have not yet done so to expedite the signing and ratification of the Protocol.

The African Court on Human and Peoples Rights will complement the protective mandate of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and address the need to build a just, united and peaceful Continent free from fear, want and ignorance. Furthermore, the Court will enhance the African Union's commitment to the realisation of human rights and the fundamental values of tolerance, solidarity, gender equality, and humanitarian action on the Continent.

Addis Ababa, 30 December 2003