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31st December, 2020

PUBLIC STATEMENT ON THE STATE OF THE RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

To: All Media Houses

The pivotal role played by the unconditional observance of the Rule of Law and respect to fundamental human rights and freedoms is the fulcrum of the East African Community. Over the past few days, we have observed and noted with much trepidation increasing reports on the deteriorating state of human rights, civic space and Rule of Law within the Republic of Uganda. Just a few days to the 14th January 2021 general elections, we have witnessed far reaching human rights violations, wanton killings, partisan policing, freezing of accounts of several NGOS engaged in rule of law initiatives, incommunicado detention of human rights defenders and political opponents, trumped up criminal charges against advocates of rule of law.

The Republic of Uganda has an inherent obligation under the Constitution as well as under the Treaty Establishing the East African Community to adhere to good governance standards, Rule of Law, Human Rights to all and democratic governance. These obligations are also available under the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. Even more compelling, the reported violations constitute acts of crimes against humanity under Article 7 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court. It is disturbing that many stakeholders have attributed these violations to government security agents and officers in government service. We have no doubt that the responsibility for these violations rests with the highest echelons of government in the Republic of Uganda; the President, together with his entire executive cabinet, the leadership of the police and the military and highest cadres of the bureaucracy must take responsibility and act to forestall further violations.

We unconditionally and in the strongest terms possible condemn the human rights violations being committed against civilians, lawyers, journalist, political activists and the general public in the Republic of Uganda. We call upon the President of the Republic of Uganda, the Attorney General of the Republic of Uganda, military leaders in the Republic of Uganda, the heads of police services in the Republic of Uganda and all responsible government officials to forthwith take steps to forestall further human rights violations.

Together with our National Bar members (the Law Society of Kenya, Uganda Law Society, Tanganyika Law Society, Rwanda Bar Association, Burundi Bar Association, Zanzibar Law Society and the South Sudan Bar Association) and other partners across the region and globally, we are monitoring the situation in the Republic of Uganda and collecting crucial evidence that will enable us to institute actions against these acts that violate the EAC Treaty. We have set up an *ad hoc* Rule of Law Committee comprising highly



experienced lawyers from across the region to provide technical services for purposes of collecting and preserving relevant evidence and to prepare watertight cases against the violators.

By this statement, we call upon our members across Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan to voice their solidarity with the Uganda Law Society and the general public in the Republic of Uganda. We also invite our international partners – Pan African Lawyers Union, the International Bar Association, the Commonwealth Lawyers Association, the International Commission of Jurists and the American Bar Association to join us in our quest for accountability by the Republic of Uganda.



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