

Reimagining the Future of Human Rights in Africa: Southern Africa Convening



Securing Gains. Centering Dignity. Shaping Futures
Gaborone, Botswana | 26–28 August 2026

Agenda

Daily Time: 08:30 – 17:00



**OPEN SOCIETY
FOUNDATIONS**



ACHPR
Commission africaine des
droits de l'homme et des peuples





Day 1 – 26 August 2026: Setting the Scene : Regional Context and Strategic Framing

Time	Agenda Item	Lead
08:30 – 09:00	Arrivals and Registration	
09:00 – 09:30	Opening Session Welcome Remarks Setting out objectives and expected outcomes of the dialogue	▪ Mr. Beresa Abera – The Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) ▪ Ms. Abigail Noko, Regional Representative for Southern Africa, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. ▪ Hon. Remy Lumbu - The African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) ▪ Ms. Binaifer Nowrojee, President of Open Society Foundations (Virtual) Official Opening - The Speaker of the Botswana National Assembly - Honourable Dithapelo Keorapetse
09:30 – 10:00	Performance Art: Artistic interpretation of human rights landscape in Southern Africa	Mafitlhakgosi Traditional Dance Group
10:00 – 10:45	Keynote Address by Ms. Navanethem 'Navi' Pillay and Fireside Chat on the State of Human Rights in Southern Africa ▪ Geopolitics, Regional Influence and Trends: The state of human rights in the world, with a special focus on Southern Africa. ▪ Rethinking human rights frameworks in evolving contexts in Southern Africa.	Moderator: Nozipho Ndebele, OSF Ms. Navanethem 'Navi' Pillay, former UN High Commissioner of Human Rights In conversation with Brian Kagoro, Managing Director - Open Society Foundations and Ms. Abigail Noko, Regional Representative for Southern Africa, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights





Time	Agenda Item	Lead
10:45 – 11:00	Coffee Break	
11:00 – 12:15	Panel Discussion: Recentring Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Southern Africa: Inequality, Participation and Inclusive Development <i>Recentring ESCR amid inequality:</i> Structural economic, spatial, and gender disparities as core barriers to access, dignity, and livelihoods. <i>Participation, voice and inclusion:</i> The importance of enabling environments for communities to engage, organise, and shape equitable policies and resource allocation. <i>Early warning signs and governance gaps:</i> Inequality and exclusion as indicators of institutional stress, weak responsiveness, and declining public trust. <i>Linking rights, development and governance:</i> The interdependence between inclusive development, accountable governance, and open civic space, recognising that constraints on civic freedoms and participation undermine the realisation of ESCR.	Admire Mutizwa, Head of Program – Church Peace and Just Societies, Zimbabwe Council of Churches Nomzamo Zondo, The Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI) Machinda Marongwe, Oxfam the Southern Africa Cluster Regional Director Sandra Liebenberg, Stellenbosch University Moderator: Mark Heywood, Social Justice Activist.
12:15 – 13:15	Lunch Break	



Time	Agenda Item	Lead
13:15 – 14:45	Accountability, Security, and the Future of Rights in Southern Africa Across Southern Africa, accountability and oversight mechanisms are struggling to meaningfully constrain expanding state security power. How is this dynamic playing out in practice, and what does it mean for the ability of institutions to check abuse in the name of peace, security and stability? State security institutions are mandated to uphold rights, yet are often experienced as instruments of political, economic, or social control. How do accountability systems shape, enable, or fail to disrupt this reality, and what would it take to reposition courts, police, intelligence services and the military as credible protectors of the public interest and rights? If cycles of abuse and impunity are not accidental but sustained by deeper structural incentives, what would a meaningful reset of accountability and security look like in Southern Africa, one that shifts from controlling populations to securing rights, and what new forms of power, enforcement, and civilian oversight would this require?	Kaajal Ramjathan-Keogh, International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) Sean Tait, African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum Dhiya Pillay Matai, Institute for Security Studies (ISS) Pamela Towela Sambo, NHRI Chairperson Zambia. Moderator: Vongai Chikwanda - Amnesty International East and Southern Africa (iii)





Time	Agenda Item	Lead
14:45 - 15:00	Coffee Break	
15:00 - 16:30	SADC Futures: Human Rights in the Digital Age Reflections on the tenets of a durable Southern African tech ecosystem: How can Southern Africa build proactive and context-specific tech policies and governance models that centre dignity, equity, and public interest? Implications of emerging tech tools and digital platforms on rights, citizen participation and economic outcomes. Southern African-anchored approaches to achieving digital sovereignty that enables a more equitable distribution of value, knowledge and opportunity	Athandiwe Saba, AI, media & data strategist, Code for Africa Afia Asantewaa Asare-Kyei, Meta Oversight Board William Bird, Director Moxii Africa (formerly Media Monitoring Africa) Karen Smit, Vodacom Moderator: Thobekile Matimbe, Paradigm Initiative.
16:30 - 17:00	Reflections and Day 1 Wrap-Up	
19:00	Dinner at leisure	





Day 2 : 27 August 2026 : Deep Dives– Thematic Engagement

Time	Agenda Item	Lead
08:30 – 09:00	Arrival Coffee and Networking	
09:00 – 10:15	Gender, Power and Identity within African Contexts: Centring Agency, Justice, and Diverse Lived Realities What forms of <i>support, enabling conditions</i>, and systemic change are needed to uphold the dignity, rights, and agency of diverse groups, including women, children, refugees, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ people, across African societies? How are <i>tensions between cultural practices and gender equality</i> currently navigated, and what more grounded, context-sensitive approaches could strengthen both justice and social cohesion? What do we mean when we invoke concepts such as <i>“African values,” “African families,”</i> and <i>“African sovereignty”</i> in relation to human rights, dignity, and inclusion, and who defines these meanings? How can <i>African-centred understandings of justice and community</i> better reflect lived realities and move beyond exclusionary or politicised narratives around identity and rights?	Hon. Unity Dow, Member of Parliament of Botswana, former Botswana High ‘court Judge and human rights activist; Mai Mamoun Mubark Aman, Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa Ecclesia de Lange, Director of Inclusive and Affirming Ministries (IAM) Moderator: Nombuso Mathibela, African EcoFeminist Collective
10:15 – 10:30	Artistic word/play/interpretation	
10:30 – 10:45	Coffee Break	





Time	Agenda Item	Lead
10.45 – 12.30	Reimagining Land Justice in Southern Africa Interrogate <i>land access, ownership and control</i> not only as a development issue, but as a core human rights question rooted in historical injustice. Explore the <i>limitations of existing land reform approaches</i>, the tensions between economic models and redistribution, and the risks that unresolved land grievances pose to democratic trust and social cohesion. Reflect on what it means to <i>reimagine land as a human right</i>, including its implications for reparative justice, community control, and equitable development Identify <i>pathways that align</i> with a more preventive, inclusive, and future-fit human rights agenda in Southern Africa	Lebohang Liepollo Pheko, Senior Research Fellow at Trade Collective Tshepo Madlingozi, extraordinary professor, Centre for Social Justice and South Africa Human Rights Commissioner. Mercia Andrews - Rural Women's Assembly Mnqobi Ngubani, maker of documentary Mathonga Elizwe – Spirits of the Land Sibusiso Innocent Zikode - Abahlali baseMjondolo Movement SA Moderator: John Nakuta, Human rights lawyer, former media ombudsman Namibia and law lecturer and social justice scholar-University of Namibia.
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch Break	



Time	Agenda Item	Lead
13.30– 14:45	Mineral Economies and the Pursuit of Justice, Equity and Sovereignty in the SADC Region Session Overview: ▪ The history of mining in Southern Africa is inseparable from the legacies of colonialism, land dispossession, labour exploitation, environmental harm, and persistent inequalities that have concentrated wealth and power in the hands of a few while leaving many mining-affected communities excluded from decision-making, resource benefits, and impoverished. As the global race for critical minerals intensifies, the SADC region and its people have a critical opportunity to ensure that their vast mineral wealth is not used to replicate historic patterns of exclusion and exploitation, but instead that it serves as a catalyst for green industrialization grounded in value addition, regional integration, energy and economic sovereignty, justice and equity. ▪ This session will investigate who benefits and who bears the costs of this new global race for mineral resources, the extent to which it differs from past resource booms, and what pathways exist for advancing justice, equity and sovereignty for those who continue to bear the burdens of the social and environmental costs of mineral extraction. The session will also explore alternative visions of future-facing mineral economies in Southern Africa, which place human rights, justice, sovereignty, and community agency and participation at the heart of mineral governance.	Dineo Skosana, Senior Researcher and Head- Society Work and Politics Institute, University of the Witwatersrand Meamande Wamukwamba, Movement for Economic and Social Development in Africa (MESDA) Zambia Claude Kabemba, Executive Director, Southern Africa Resources Watch (SARW) - <i>(Virtual)</i> Eugène Chretien, President of Struggle for the South (Madagascar) Moderator: Hon. Yvonne Dausab, former Minister of Justice Namibia and Executive Dean Faculty of Commerce, Management and Law.
14:45 –15:00	Coffee Break	





Time	Agenda Item	Lead
15:00 – 16:30	Think Labs Geopolitics, Regional Influence, and Global Positioning: Where and what are the opportunities for leadership within continental and global frameworks? The role of faith, traditional leaders and social influencers. Extractive Economies, Land, and Inequality: Negotiating and finding a balance in the tension between development and rights. Accountability, Security Governance, and Democratic Trust: What practical steps are needed to strengthen and renew these institutions so they can better deliver on rights and justice? Rethinking defenders' protection in the face of new threats to civic space and actors A foresight exercise on the future of human rights in Southern Africa	Alice Mogwe - DITSHWANELO - The Botswana Centre for Human Rights (i) Meamande Wamukwamba - Movement for Economic and Social Development in Africa (MESDA) and Mandla Hadebe - EJA (ii) Vongai Chikwanda - Amnesty International East and Southern Africa (iii) Mary Pais Da Silva - African Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders and Tabani Moyo - Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) (iv) Roselyn Hanzi - Independent Consultant and Lúcia da Silveira – KUTAKESA (v)
16:30 – 17:00	Reflections and Day 2 Wrap-Up	
18:30 – 20:30	Cocktail and dinner	



Day 3 – 28 August 2026 : Integration, Cross-Cutting Priorities, and Way Forward

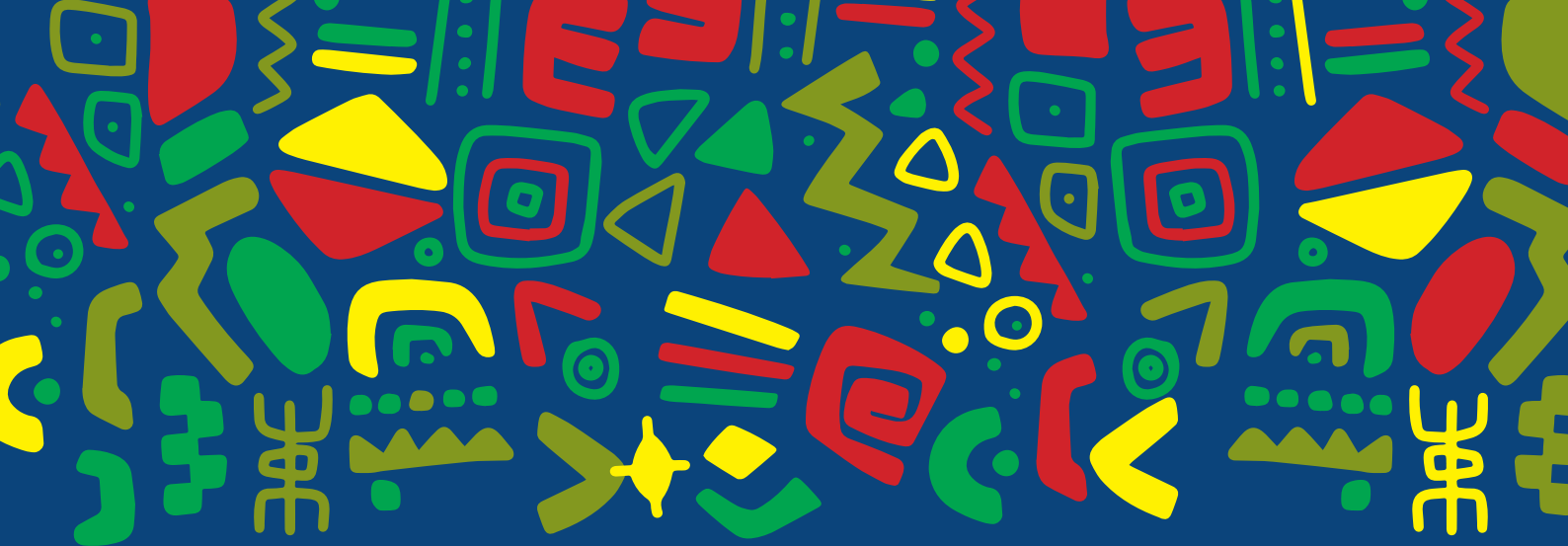
Time	Agenda Item	Lead
08:30 – 09:00	Arrival Coffee and Networking	
09:00 – 10:30	Building a youth-led agenda for human rights ▪ Framing remarks: Hon. Lesego Chombo, Botswana Minister of Youth and Gender Affairs Panel discussion: ▪ Strategies to achieve a sustainable and future-ready intergenerational human rights vision in Southern Africa ▪ Strengthening and rethinking the role of young people in shaping and safeguarding human rights standards and norms ▪ The impact of digital tools and platforms on how young people are experiencing and responding to emerging human rights threats	Mpule Kgetsi, former African Union Youth Ambassador for Peace (AYAP) Charles Kajoloweka, YAS Malawi Jean Eric Heriniaina, Youth HRD Madagascar Millicent Setaile, Board Chair of the Botswana National Youth Council (BNYC) Moderator: Namatai Kwekweza, WELEAD Africa
10:30 – 10:50	Coffee Break	
10:50 – 12:30	Labour migration and the future of rights and citizenship in Southern Africa ▪ Explore how labour migration is reshaping citizenship, belonging, and access to rights in Southern Africa, ▪ Identify forward-looking pathways for aligning regional realities with emerging African Union norms on mobility, nationality, and inclusion (2018 Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, 2024 Protocol to the ACHPRs on the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness ▪ Examine the tensions between these forward-looking commitments and the realities on the ground, including restrictive migration regimes, rising xenophobia, informal labour systems, and legal exclusion. ▪ Gig workers and the future of work	Khabele Matlosa, Strategic Institute for Research and Dialogue (SIRD) Brian Mrahwa, WITS African Centre for Migration and Society Heather Anne Thuynsma, South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) Yasmin Sooka, human rights lawyer, activist and Director of the Foundation for Human Rights - <i>(Virtual)</i> Moderator: Bonolo Makgale, Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria





Time	Agenda Item	Lead
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch Break	
13:30 – 15:00	Working Sessions - From Insight to Action: Shaping a future Southern Africa <i>Human Rights Agenda:</i> ▪ Identifying early warning signals and response strategies ▪ Strengthening regional collaboration ▪ Strengthening institutions	Adriano Nuvunga - Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) Nabeelah Mia , Lawyers for Human Rights Bellinda Chinowawa , Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights.
15:00 – 15:20	Coffee Break	
15:20 – 16:45	Plenary Feedback Session: Priorities for reimagining the future of human rights in Southern Africa ▪ Presentation of key outcomes and commitments	Group Presenters
16:45 – 17:00	Closing Remarks	Brian Kagoro , Open Society Foundations Abigail Noko , United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.





Reimagining the Future of Human Rights in Africa: Southern Africa Convening



**OPEN SOCIETY
FOUNDATIONS**



ACHPR
Commission africaine des
droits de l'homme et des peuples

