

Statement on Joint Letter of Urgent Appeal to the Republic of Senegal

On 12 February 2024, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, in collaboration with the Commissioner Rapporteur responsible for the human rights situation in the Republic of the Senegal of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (the Commission), transmitted a Joint Letter of Urgent Appeal to His Excellency Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, in response to reports received regarding an internet shutdown in the Republic of Senegal, which started on Sunday 04 February 2024 and appears to be recurring on 13 February 2024.

The letter, *inter alia*, requested clarification on the reports of an internet shutdown in Senegal, reiterated the rights enshrined in the ***African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*** and the ***Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa*** (the Declaration), in addition highlighting the importance of the internet in advancing human and peoples' rights in Africa.

The Commission has also learnt of the decision issued by the Minister of Communication, Telecommunications and Digital Affairs, which stated that “due to dissemination on social networks of several hateful and subversive messages which have caused violent demonstrations with deaths and significant material damage, the internet of mobile data is suspended this Tuesday, February 13, 2024.” In this regard, the Commission wishes to stress the provisions of the Declaration, in particular ***Principle 38*** on non-interference with the right of individuals to seek, receive and impart information through any means of communication and digital technologies, in addition to ***Principle 33*** which indicates the exemptions under which information may be legitimately withheld.

Done on 13 February 2024, Banjul, The Gambia