

Turning Recognition into Action: Advancing Equality for CDWD in Africa

Presented by Halimatou Ceesey, Activist and Senior Rights Expert on CDWD (GForD), Banjul, October 21, 2025



Speaking on behalf of the **International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA)** and the **Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (GForD)**, Halimatou Ceesey highlighted the ongoing struggles of over 270 million people worldwide who continue to face discrimination rooted in caste, slavery, and inherited social status, including millions across Africa.

She reminded the Commission that this marginalization is not accidental but the result of centuries of structural injustice from slavery and colonization to entrenched social hierarchies, which still deprive affected communities of equal access to justice, education, and economic opportunities today.

Ceesey praised the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights for its continued dedication to justice and equality and particularly welcomed the adoption of **Resolution 619** at the 81st Ordinary Session, which formally acknowledges the discrimination faced by Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (**CDWD**).

She emphasized, however, that **recognition alone is not enough** as it must be followed by decisive and inclusive action.

She urged the Commission to:

- Develop and promote **guidelines** for implementing Resolution 619 at the national level.
- Support governments in **reforming laws and policies** to eliminate caste-based discrimination and to adopt **affirmative measures** that address historical injustices.
- Ensure **CDWD inclusion** in national reparations, truth-telling, and justice programs.
- Promote **awareness campaigns** that dismantle social and customary norms fueling exclusion.

- Encourage the collection of disaggregated data to make CDWD visible in human rights and development frameworks.
- Establish a dedicated focal point or working group within the Commission to monitor implementation and progress.

Ceeseey further underlined that **reparations must be tangible and transformative, not just symbolic**. She stressed that justice must move beyond acknowledgment and translate into real change through the restoration of land and access to traditional livelihoods, investment in education, health, housing, and economic empowerment, and the enforcement of legal and political inclusion. **She called for official recognition of historical injustices and for building strong institutions capable of ensuring accountability and redress.**

In a firm and compelling stance, Ceeseey declared that **Africa's commitment to human rights will only be realized when CDWD communities are no longer invisible, but active participants in shaping the continent's future**. She called on the African Commission, governments, and civil society to transform words into justice, recognition into restitution, and inclusion into reality, affirming that the path to **a just and united Africa begins with dismantling the structures that keep millions marginalized.**