

Statement at 50th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council

Item : UPR Outcome Uganda

Speaker : KUGONZA, Brenda

Mr. President

This is a joint statement¹.

We take the opportunity of the adoption of the UPR report for the review of Uganda to note with satisfaction Uganda's acceptance of several recommendations aimed at ensuring defenders work in a safe environment, and improving the legislative framework protecting them to combat discrimination, intimidation, and threats they face.

, We also wish to commend efforts in the drafting of the bill on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders which was tabled in 2020 before parliament. The adoption of the bill is important for the recognition of the work of all defenders and would legitimise their rights to defend rights within the national legal frameworks.

Nonetheless, in Uganda women defenders are facing particular challenges due to their gender, and because of the nature of their work. Women defenders identifying as or working with the LGBTI community are at particular risk, as are those working to promote and protect the rights of sex workers .Furthermore, land and environment women defenders working as parts of communities to oppose resource extraction and mining operations have been threatened and intimidated by non-state actors and a number have faced arrests.

Therefore, We further call on Uganda to

- Adopt the Human Rights Defenders Bill and ensure it is gender sensitive to give full force and effect to the UN resolution on the Protection of women defenders and the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders;
- Publicly affirm the legitimate role of women defenders and protect them from violations by state and non-state actors by acknowledging such violations and implementing security measures for them
- Finally, refrain from criminalising the legitimate activities of defenders including women defenders and repeal all laws and policies that restrict their activities and rights, including the Public Order Management act, The Anti-Pornography Act, Anti-Money Laundering Act, Anti – Terrorism Act (as amended) and the Computer Misuse Act.

I Thank you.

¹ ISHR and the Women Human Rights Defenders Network Uganda (WHRDN-U)