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African Commission on
Human and Peoples' Rights

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**79TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND
PEOPLES' RIGHTS**

INTERSESSION REPORT

Presented by

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Commissioner and Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and Focal Point on Reprisals in Africa;

Focal Point on Judicial Independence;

Rapporteur for States Parties: Algeria, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali and Togo.

Banjul, 14 May to 3 June 2024

INTRODUCTION

1. This Report is submitted in accordance with Rules 25(3) and 64 of the Rules of Procedure (2020) of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (the Commission) and gives an account of the activities carried out during the intersession period on the promotion and protection of human rights since the 77th Ordinary Session held from 20 October to 9 November 2023 in Arusha, Tanzania.
2. This report is divided into five main parts.
3. The first gives an account of the activities carried out in my capacity as Focal Point on Judicial independence, in accordance with Resolution ACHPR/Res.570 (LXXVII) 2023 on the appointment of a Focal Point on Judicial Independence in Africa, adopted by the Commission at its 77th Ordinary Session.
4. The second part deals with the initiatives carried out as Country Rapporteur responsible for monitoring the human rights situation in Algeria, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Togo.
5. Thirdly, it sets out the activities carried out pursuant to the mandate of Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and Focal Point on Reprisals in Africa created by Resolution ACHPR/69(XXXV)04 of the Commission. This mandate was expanded to cover the issue of reprisals by Resolution ACHPR/Res.273 (LV)2014. It was renewed by Resolutions ACHPR/Res.83(XXXVIII)05, ACHPR/Res.125(XXXII)07, ACHPR/Res.149(XLVI)09, ACHPR/Res.202(L)2011, ACHPR/Res.248(LIV)2013, ACHPR/Res.315(LVII)2015, ACHPR/Res.381(LXI)2017, ACHPR/Res.425 (LXV) 2019, ACHPR/Rss.451 (LXVI) 2020 and ACHPR/Res.526 (LXXIII) 2022.
6. The fourth part presents a brief analysis of the situation of Human Rights Defenders, Freedom of Association and Assembly, and Reprisals in Africa.
7. The final part contains recommendations for the various stakeholders involved in the Special Rapporteur's mandate.

PART I
FOCAL POINT ACTIVITIES ON JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

8. Two activities were carried out. The participation in the Symposium on Electoral Justice (A) and the publication of a Press Release during the International Day of Women Judges (B).

A. Participation in the Symposium on Electoral Justice held from 31 January to 3 February 2024 in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

9. During the period under review, I took part in the third Regional Symposium on Electoral Justice organised by the Africa Electoral Justice Network from 31 January to 3 February 2024 at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.
10. The main objective of the Symposium was to bring together representatives of electoral judges to engage, collaborate and share valuable information, expertise, experiences and resources to contribute to justice in electoral matters and improve the integrity of elections in Africa.
11. On this occasion, I took part in the panel on protecting the independence and impartiality of judges involved in resolving electoral disputes. My statement focused on the role of the African Union and its Organs in protecting judicial independence as part of electoral justice. Furthermore, I underscored the African Commission's initiatives and presented Resolution ACHPR/Res.570 (LXXVII) 2023 on the appointment of a Focal Point on Judicial Independence in Africa.

Results 1:

- Familiarise participants with African Union and sub-regional standards governing democratic elections;
- Popularise Resolution 570 among the highest judicial authorities in the Southern African sub-region of the Continent;

Recommendation 1: Need to popularise this Resolution in the other sub-regions- Central, East, North and West Africa and in the Portuguese-speaking countries.

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B. Press Release on the occasion of International Day of Women Judges

12. In accordance with Resolution 75/274 of 18 April 2021, passed by the United Nations General Assembly, I have always joined the international community in commemorating International Day of Women Judges on 10 March each year. The purpose of this commemoration, as espoused by the Resolution, is to highlight the fact that "few women

hold the position as judges at all levels of the judiciary, and in particular in senior positions of the judiciary".

13. Conscious of the fact that the situation in Africa is hardly different from that of other continents, I particularly urged States Parties to make public, through the data available to the relevant professional organisations of judges, the statistics on men and women involved in the administration of justice; to encourage the full and equal participation of women at all levels of the judiciary; and to promote national public policies that demonstrate that the massive or equal presence of women judges or women magistrates within the judiciary can effectively contribute to the independence of the judiciary on the continent.

Result 2: The voice of Africa on the issue of mainstreaming of women judges has been popularised.

Recommendation 2 : Request the States Parties to report henceforth on this obligation to the Commission.

PART II ACTIVITIES AS COMMISSIONER COUNTRY RAPPORTEUR

14. In my capacity as Commissioner-Country Rapporteur responsible for monitoring the human rights situation **in the States Parties of Algeria, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Togo**, I have taken a number of actions concerning the following States Parties:
15. Regarding **the Republic of Mali**, I issued a Press Release on 12 April 2024, following the Council of Ministers' decision on 10 April 2024 to suspend the activities of political parties and associations, and on the action taken on 11 April 2024 by the High Communication Authority (HAC) inviting all the media houses to stop broadcasting and publishing the activities of political parties and associations.
16. On that occasion, I expressed the Commission's concern about these decisions, which are likely to restrict the rights to freedom of expression, access to information, association and assembly and participation in public affairs guaranteed by the African Charter and other relevant instruments duly ratified by Mali. To this end, I urged the Malian authorities to take all necessary measures to put an end to restrictions on civic space and to respect and implement all the rights guaranteed by the African Charter and other relevant instruments.

17. Regarding the **Togolese Republic**, I published a Press Release on 11 April 2024 about the situation concerning the rights to freedom of association and assembly following the government's decision to ban demonstrations by political parties and civil society organisations that had been planned for 11 to 13 April 2024 to protest against the passage of a bill on constitutional revision that would change Togo from a presidential to a parliamentary system.
18. While expressing the Commission's concern, I took the opportunity to call on the Togolese authorities to refrain from any decision likely to impede the effective enjoyment of the rights guaranteed by the African Charter and other relevant regional and international human rights instruments ratified by Togo, in particular the rights to freedom of association and assembly.

Result 3: These press releases send a strong signal to stakeholders, drawing their attention to the human rights situations highlighted. The press releases also alert international opinion to areas of concern that require keen attention.

Recommendation 3: Protect human rights defenders working in the constitutional review sector.

PART III
ACTIVITIES IN MY CAPACITY AS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND FOCAL POINT ON REPRISALS IN AFRICA

A. PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

I. Advocacy Visit for the adoption of a law on the protection of human rights defenders in Senegal, 29 and 30 November 2023 in Dakar, Senegal

19. I visited the Republic of Senegal on 29 and 30 September 2023 to lobby for the adoption of a legislation on the protection of human rights defenders in the country. During the visit, I met with the Prime Minister, H.E. Mr. Sidiki Kaba, the Minister for Human Rights and Good Governance, H.E. Mr Momar Samb, the Chairman of the National Assembly's Legislation and Human Rights Committee, the Honourable Moussa Diakhaté; the Legal Adviser to the President of the Republic, Professor Ousmane Khouma and the Deputy Regional Representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr Benjamin Hounton.

20. During our various meetings, we discussed the situation of human rights defenders and the progress made in the ongoing passage of a legislation to protect human rights defenders.
21. I reemphasized the need for the Government to take appropriate measures to implement the recommendations made by the Commission following the presentation of the last two periodic reports of 2015 and 2023 on the implementation of the African Charter, in particular those urging the Government of Senegal to complete the process of adopting the legislation to protect human rights defenders, with the inclusion, among others, of the establishment of an independent mechanism for the protection of human rights defenders.
22. I also held consultations with about twenty representatives of Senegalese civil society, who briefed me about the situation of human rights defenders, the challenges confronting them and the need to protect them by the passage of legislation.
23. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) for the facilities made available as part of organisation of the visit. My gratitude also goes to Mrs Adelaide Etong of ISHR and Mr Seidina Gassama of Amnesty International-Senegal for accompanying us on our mission and for the facilities provided to ensure the smooth conduct of the mission.

Result 4: Awareness-raising and advocacy on the need for a legislation on the protection of Human Rights Defenders.

Recommendation 4 : Continue with the same advocacy in the other countries that need it.

II. Academic Visit to the Republic of Cameroon, from 26 to 29 March 2024

24. Together with Mr Clément Voulé, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Assembly and Association, I took part in an academic visit organised by the Central African Human Rights Defenders Network (REDHAC).
25. During this visit, I was granted audience by about twenty people, including administrative, religious and traditional authorities, members of political parties and civil society organisations. We discussed the current situation in Cameroon, the obstacles to fundamental freedoms, the various crises the country is experiencing, the consequences of these on the daily lives of human rights defenders, journalists, political parties and the

general public, and finally I put forward proposals for solutions in collaboration with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Assembly and Association.

26. This meeting was also marked by an encounter with members of civil society. On this occasion, I examined the progress and challenges in the area of human rights in Africa. The meeting also provided an essential platform for activists to discuss their experiences and concerns. Discussions focused on how civil society organisations (CSOs) can strengthen their human rights work, how to deal with reprisals and intimidation, and the role of the ACHPR in addressing human rights violations. Participants were able to share effective strategies and practices for dealing with persecution and other challenges, enhancing their capacity to effectively defend human rights in their sphere of operation.
27. As part of this visit, I laid the foundation stone for the Centre for Research and Documentation on Human Rights in Central Africa. This initiative marks a significant step towards strengthening the protection and promotion of human rights in a region where they are sorely needed. This innovative centre will not only be an essential hub for human rights research and documentation in the region, but will also serve as a refuge for human rights defenders (HRDs) in distress in Central Africa.

Result 5: Update on the situation of Human Rights Defenders and the work of the Special Mechanism, as well as the formulation of recommendations on the protection and restoration of civic space in Africa.

Recommendation 5 : We encourage civil society organisations to initiate academic visits of the Mechanism in order to learn from the experience of human rights defenders in various countries.

III. Participation in the Consultation to launch discussions with a view to setting up a network of women human rights defenders for Central Africa, held virtually on 2 April 2024.

28. I took part in a consultation webinar organised on 2 April 2024 by the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa (the Centre) in collaboration with REDHAC.
29. The overall purpose of the webinar was to launch discussions on the creation of a space for regular exchange and sharing of good practices between women human rights defenders (WHRDs) in Central Africa, with a view to strengthening the links between WHRDs in the sub-region and with REDHAC and CNUDHD-AC; with a view to discussing the

challenges and opportunities facing WHRDs; and to identifying potential joint actions and/or activities.

30. In my speech at the opening of this meeting, I recalled the specific challenges that women human rights defenders face on a daily basis due to their gender, which in Africa's deeply patriarchal society constitutes a real obstacle to their activities.
31. I highlighted some of the Commission's initiatives and lent my support to the establishment of a network of this kind, which would enable women human rights defenders to work in synergy with a view to adopting appropriate strategies to improve their situation.
32. The discussions and exchanges led to an understanding of the importance and necessity of creating a network dedicated to the FDDH in Central Africa, following the example of other regions.

Result 6: Raising awareness about the importance of creating a network of women human rights defenders in Central Africa.

Recommendation 6 : Need for the formation of other networks of women human rights defenders in the other sub-regions of Africa

IV. Participation in the Consultation on Civic Space and Capacity Building for Advocacy Initiatives with the ACHPR and the Special Mechanisms of the UN Human Rights Council, 22 and 23 April 2024, in Porto Novo, Benin.

33. I participated in the Consultation on Civic Space and Capacity Building for Advocacy Initiatives with the Commission and Special Procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UN) which took place from 22 to 23 April 2024 in Porto Novo, Benin. It brought together various stakeholders, including representatives of civil society organisations, national human rights institutions and mandate-holders of the UN Special Procedures.
34. The overall objective of the meeting was to discuss and explore ways of improving civic space and strengthening advocacy initiatives in Africa in general and in West Africa in particular. Presentations and discussions included an overview of civic space in West Africa, the role of NHRIs and civil society organisations in promoting civic space and protecting human rights defenders, engaging with the African and UN human rights

systems, the role of the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, and harnessing digital tools for effective advocacy.

35. In my statement on civil society engagement with the African human rights system and advocacy mechanisms, I highlighted the ACHPR's initiatives in promoting and protecting the rights of Human Rights Defenders. I underscored the need for collaboration and capacity building to equip human rights defenders to address the challenges they are confronted with.
36. The consultation enabled participants to share experiences, challenges and best practices in the area of promoting civic space and human rights in Africa. It also highlighted the need for greater collaboration and capacity building to address the challenges faced by civil society organisations and National Human Rights Institutions in the region.
37. The consultation ended with a call to action, urging stakeholders to work together to promote and protect civic space and human rights in Africa. Participants emphasised the need to strengthen the support and protection of human rights defenders, to put in place gender-sensitive policies and to include young people in decision-making processes. The consultation provided valuable information and recommendations to guide stakeholders in their efforts to promote and protect human rights in the region.

Result 7: Carrying out an assessment of the situation of the rights of human rights defenders in West Africa, and developing capacities and advocacy initiatives in Africa.

Recommendation 7: Enhance capacity building initiatives for the benefit of human rights defenders towards improving their interaction with Regional and UN Human Rights Mechanisms.

V. Publication of Press Releases

38. I have issued Press Releases on a number of occasions, particularly when situations have an impact on human rights or when important events are commemorated.
39. On 9 December 2023, I published a Press Release on the occasion of the International Day of Human Rights Defenders in which I gave an overview of the situation of HRDs in Africa, expressing my indignation at the violations of their rights and the impunity that covers them up; the intolerance of certain States that consider human rights defenders as institutional troublemakers, accomplices of opposition or foreign forces, enemies of law and order, etc.

Result 8: Raising awareness among the various stakeholders about the situation of human rights defenders and alerting international opinion to areas of concern that require particular attention.

Recommendation 8: Maintain the same momentum of alert regarding all the issues concerning human rights defenders.

I. PROTECTION ACTIVITIES

I. Urgent Appeals

40. During the period under review, the Mechanism received complaints on alleged violations of the rights of human rights defenders, which it followed up on according to the specific needs of each case. Some of these complaints touched on allegations of human rights violations committed against human rights defenders. Thus, during the period under review, ten urgent appeal letters were sent to the States Parties of Angola, Burundi, Egypt, Eswatini, Malawi, Mauritania, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania and Tunisia. The allegations mainly concerned cases of murder, judicial harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention, reprisals and intimidation of human rights defenders.
41. I have also issued press releases, in particular the press release of 5 December 2023 on the kidnapping of Dr Daouda Diallo, a Burkina Faso human rights defender because of his human rights activities within the Collectif contre l'Impunité et la Stigmatisation des Communautés (CISC), of which he is the founder and Secretary General.
42. I would also like to mention the press release of 6 February 2024 on the situation of the rights to freedom of assembly and demonstration in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Senegal, following serious violations of the rights to freedom of assembly and demonstration, as well as the arbitrary arrest and detention of about ten human rights activists who had assembled to commemorate and denounce the 600-day occupation of the town of Bunagana, in the east of the DRC, by the M23 rebels. The press release on Senegal concerned the arrest of political opponents and the excessive use of force and tear gas by the forces of law and order to repress demonstrations organised in February 2024 in Dakar, Senegal to protest against the postponement of the presidential elections on 25 February 2024.

43. In the various press releases, I condemned the serious restrictions imposed on the rights to freedom of assembly and demonstration. I called on the relevant authorities to refrain from all acts of harassment, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and the abusive and disproportionate use of force during peaceful demonstrations and popular protests.

Result 9: Draw the attention of States Parties concerned regarding the adoption of adequate measures to address the alleged violations, if they are found to be true.

Recommendation 9: Respond to the urgent appeal letters sent by the Mechanism.

II. States Responses

44. The Mechanism has received the response of the Mauritanian government indicating the measures put in place for the promotion and protection of the civic space since the coming into power of H.E. Mr. Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani in 2019. The government further underscored the improvement in the situation of human rights defenders who are carrying out all their activities and enjoy a new legal protection framework since the adoption of Law 2021-004 on the protection of associations.
45. The other States Parties concerned have still not responded to the appeals, but some of them are within the deadline for submitting their responses.

PART IV ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN AFRICA

46. A favourable national legal framework is a necessary element in guaranteeing a safe and conducive environment for the work of human rights defenders, as laid down in many international and regional instruments, in particular in situations where laws and practices are non-existent and where their work is inhibited and criminalised. It is necessary to adopt legislation and measures that ensure their effective implementation in order to guarantee their support and protection.
47. The situation of human rights defenders has evolved positively in some countries, while in others it continues to deteriorate. The following is an overview of the situation of human rights defenders, freedom of association and assembly, freedom of demonstration and the issue of reprisals in a number of countries.

A. FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND DEMONSTRATION IN AFRICA

48. Freedom of assembly and peaceful demonstration are essential to collective expression and the defence of all human rights.

49. In terms of positive developments, the Mechanism noted in particular:

- The Gabonese transitional government's initiative in favour of civil society organisations, particularly through the release of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience detained under the previous regime;
- The political will of the Republic of Senegal to adopt legislation on the protection of human rights defenders.

50. Among the areas of concern identified by the Mechanism, the following were identified:

- Despite the general commitment of States Parties to respect and guarantee human rights without discrimination, the persistence of legislative frameworks and legal restrictions severely hamper the work of civil society associations and organisations in some States, despite their important contributions;
- The politicisation of civil society organisations and the work of human rights defenders;
- The absence of laws and other legal mechanisms specifically protecting human rights defenders in most countries leaves a wide-open door to violations of the rights of HRDs and reinforces their vulnerability;
- Continued observation by some States of emergency health or security measures to unduly restrict the freedoms (rights) of association and assembly, in particular for opposition political actors, civil society and human rights defenders;
- The dissolution of opposition associations and political parties, especially the dissolution of the Association called "Observatoire pour la Bonne Gouvernance et les Elections" (Observatory for Good Governance and Elections) pronounced on 20 December 2023 by the Council of Ministers in Mali;
- Arrest and detention of Mr Abdoulaye MATH, President of the Movement for the Defence of Human Rights on 19 February 2024 by the Cameroonian authorities,

accused of: "*facilitating the commission of an offence against the Attorney General, contempt and organising a protest demonstration*";

- The adoption of restrictive legislation, in particular the Private Voluntary Organization Amendment Bill 2024 adopted on 1 March 2024 by the Zimbabwean government to combat money laundering and the financing of terrorism and to ensure that non-governmental organizations do not engage in political lobbying, certain provisions of which infringe the rights to freedom of association, freedom of expression and the work of civil society organizations;
- Demonstrations were violently repressed, resulting in mass arrests, loss of life and numerous injuries in the run-up to the presidential election in Senegal on 25 March 2024;
- In April 2024, a demonstration to express dissatisfaction with persistent disruption to ferry services was banned and two of the organisers were arrested by the Gambian police.

51. The Commission recalls its Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly in Africa, which it adopted to assist States Parties, including policy makers, law drafters and legislators, to ensure that legislation, policies and administrative practices are in line with best practice and international standards and that measures do not unjustifiably infringe on the freedoms of association and assembly.

52. We encourage States to use these Guidelines and note specifically the important role played by national courts in guaranteeing the freedoms of association and assembly. We also call on national human rights institutions and NGOs to disseminate these Guidelines widely, to monitor their implementation and to share information relevant to our mandate.

B. THE ISSUE OF REPRISALS ON THE CONTINENT

53. Acts of reprisal are still rife and take various forms, including murders, assassinations, systematic harassment, undue restrictions on access to meetings of human rights organisations, various threats, physical violence and other abuses, unjustified restrictions on the activities of civil society organisations, espionage, burglary of the headquarters of organisations and associations, defamation, suspension of accreditation, arbitrary arrests and detentions and repetitive legal proceedings, among others.

54. These cases of reprisals are virtually common to all countries, with varying degrees of seriousness depending on the country. These include
- The assassination of Mr. Salumu Miyaga, a human rights activist and coordinator of the new Congolese civil society in the Luvua sector, Tanganyika Province in the DRC;
 - Acts of reprisals by State agents against Mrs Tanele Maseko, widow of Mr Thulani Maseko (Esq) murdered in Eswatini in January 2023;
 - The forced enlistment of civil society figures in the fight against jihadism in Burkina Faso in retaliation for their positions on political developments in the country. These include Dr Daouda Diallo of the Collectif contre l'Impunité et la Stigmatisation des Communautés; Mr Boukaré Ouédraogo, of the 'Appel de Kaya' movement; and Messrs Bassirou Badjo and Rasmane Zinaba, members of the Mouvement Balai citoyen.
55. We call on States to investigate threats and acts of intimidation against human rights defenders and to ensure that the alleged perpetrators are brought to justice and that rights-holders and victims obtain justice and adequate reparation.
56. In accordance with the mandate assigned to the Mechanism on issues of reprisals, we are continuing our efforts to prevent and combat reprisals against human rights defenders who collaborate or attempt to collaborate with the African Commission.

PART V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. CONCLUSIONS

57. We continue to deplore the alarming situation of human rights defenders on the continent. The number of complaints received by the Mechanism remains stable, but some countries more than others are the subject of regular complaints, the veracity of which we endeavour to ascertain before contacting the State concerned. In this regard, we would like to emphasise that the follow-up to our urgent appeals, both in terms of the actual receipt by States and the implementation of our recommendations, remains a major challenge.
58. In terms of its activities, the Mechanism continues to work with States on a range of issues, including:
- The proper application of human rights norms and standards in respect of human rights defenders, in particular through recommendations made in the context of State reports, country visits, fact-finding missions, urgent appeals and other means.

- The adoption of legislation on the protection of human rights defenders, and in this respect, the Mechanism reiterates its willingness to accompany them in the various stages of the adoption of these laws.

59. The Mechanism is also continuing to prepare the study to assess the level of compliance of national legislation with the Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly in Africa. A detailed report on legislation and policies that impose restrictions on public freedoms and reduce the role and operational space of civil society actors will be presented in due course.

60. To this end, the Mechanism is continuing its leadership role in the drafting of the African Declaration on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights Defenders, the second consultation of which is scheduled to take place during this session.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

61. The recommendations made in our previous reports remain valid. The Mechanism would like the States Parties and the various stakeholders, including those from civil society, to take ownership of them and work towards their effective implementation.

⌘ To the States Parties:

- i. Develop, adopt and implement stronger and more adequate national laws, policies and programmes for the protection of human rights defenders;
- ii. Raise awareness of the law on human rights defenders among administrative, judicial and security authorities in order to remove all forms of restrictions on the work of human rights defenders;
- iii. Ensure that the mechanisms put in place for the protection of human rights defenders are inclusive and that representatives of civil society are brought on board;
- iv. Ensure that draft legislation on the protection of human rights defenders complies with international legal standards in order to create a favourable legal environment for their work;
- v. Refrain from adopting repressive laws aimed at restricting civic space and the legitimate activities of defenders to promote and defend human rights;
- vi. Adopt special laws to deal with the protection of human rights defenders in the environment or in situations of health and security crises or other continental or global crises;
- vii. Raise awareness and build the capacity of the various stakeholders, including human rights defenders, in relation to the laws and regulations governing the promotion and protection of human rights;

- viii. Take all appropriate measures to ensure that defenders carry out their activities under secure conditions devoid of any threat to their physical and moral integrity;
- ix. Pay particular attention to the situation of women human rights defenders, which remains a constant concern for the Special Rapporteur's Mechanism;
- x. Refrain from deregistering NGOs and civil society organisations working to promote and protect human rights, and strengthen civic and democratic space by promoting freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly for all human rights defenders;
- xi. Ensure that measures taken by States to combat terrorism are in line with the African Commission's Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa and the Principles and Guidelines on Human and Peoples' Rights while Countering Terrorism in Africa;
- xii. Put in place adequate mechanisms to compensate human rights defenders for harm suffered in the course of their work;
- xiii. Engage in dialogue and consultation with human rights defenders, publicly recognise and support their work through communication and information campaigns;
 - x. Encourage and promote the organisation of defenders' work into associative networks at national, sub-regional and continental level;
 - xi. Be more proactive in responding to allegations of violations of defenders' rights by my Mechanism and the Commission's other Mechanisms.

⌘ To the African Union and other regional and sub-regional bodies:

- i. Recognise the essential role of human rights defenders in the effective implementation of democratic principles, the rule of law, good governance and sustainable development in Africa;
- ii. Encourage Member States and the Organs of the African Union to conduct awareness-raising campaigns on the fundamental role played by human rights defenders;
- iii. Create a space for dialogue between States, human rights defenders and other key actors on challenges, good practices and progress in the protection of human rights defenders;
- iv. Encourage and support full collaboration between national, regional and international human rights mechanisms.

⌘ To National Human Rights Institutions:

- i. Fully exercise their promotion and protection mandates to hold States accountable for violations committed against human rights defenders and intervene in support of defenders who are victims of human rights violations;

- ii. Establish internal mechanisms for the protection of human rights defenders within the institution and ensure that they are adequately resourced and work actively with all human rights defenders;
- iii. Continue the initiatives relating to the regular holding of the Forum of NHRIs prior to the Commission Sessions.

⌘ To Civil Society Organisations :

- i. Continue to collaborate with national, regional and UN Mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights, in order to prevent and respond to human rights violations committed against populations and human rights defenders;
- ii. Not to focus solely on realizing certain human rights (for instance, the right to freedom of assembly) to the detriment of others (the right to life; economic, social and cultural rights and group rights) and to seek to maintain the necessary balance so that the realisation of certain rights does not lead to the destruction of others;
- iii. Establish and strengthen networks of national and regional advocates to promote collaboration and cross-sectoral approaches that build alliances with diverse groups;
- iv. Develop innovative approaches to involve the general public, political actors and other opinion leaders, including the media, in the work of human rights defenders;
- iv. Comply with the laws and regulations in place and conduct their activities in accordance with international, regional and national texts established for this purpose;
- iv. Avoid the political instrumentalisation of their activities and contribute mutually to strengthening each other's capacities;
- v. Pursue their activities to promote and defend human rights and engage in constructive dialogue with the various stakeholders.

⌘ To the Media

- i. Engage in dialogue with all human rights defenders and support their efforts to advance human rights, the rule of law, social change and development;
- ii. Work in solidarity with human rights defenders to enable them to inform themselves and the public appropriately.

⌘ To Religious and Traditional Leaders

- i. Work to remove obstacles impeding the work of human rights defenders and civil society organisations, in particular access to communities;
- ii. Work to prevent negative practices that discriminate against women defenders and human rights defenders working with people who are criminalised and/or discriminated against, such as sex workers, people living with HIV and people of diverse sexual orientations and identities.

⌘ Technical and Financial Partners

- i.** While thanking them for their ongoing support, I encourage them to continue to support the Mechanism, States Parties, national institutions and civil society in their efforts to better promote and protect the rights of human rights defenders.