

**79<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session on the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights**  
*May 2024 - Banjul, The Gambia*

Item 6: Activity Reports of the Members of the Commission & Special Mechanisms  
Report of the Working Group on Extractive Industries  
Speaker: Angela Chukunzira

Thank you Honourable Commissioner for the presentation of your report.

Extractive industries, including mining, oil drilling, and logging, have long been associated with a range of adverse impacts on African communities and ecosystems. While these industries promise economic development and job creation, their operations often result in environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, and severe health consequences for nearby populations.

One of the most significant concerns regarding extractive industries is the violation of human rights, particularly those of indigenous peoples, local communities and those who defend their rights. Too often, these communities are marginalized and disempowered, with little say in the decision-making processes that affect their lands and livelihoods. Forced evictions, land grabs, and the suppression of dissent are disturbingly common occurrences in areas where extractive projects are undertaken.

Recently, with support from ISHR, Care for Environment (CFE) and Forests and Rural Development (FODER) sent a communication to the Working Group regarding the use of mercury in gold mining despite legislations banning its use and we call on the working group to lobby against its use.

In recent years, we have witnessed increasing violations against those who protect the environment, land rights and combat the impact of climate change in Africa. In Madagascar, Angelique Decampe, an environmental human rights defender has been facing death threats. She has been reporting the illegal logging and coal mining in the Vohibola forests and despite reporting the intimidation that she faces, impunity persists. Risking further her life and that of her family in addition to the continuous destruction of the forest.

There has also been increased militarization in some regions which has resulted in an insecure working environment for EHRDs, especially women. In Cabo Delgado, armed forces, private security companies, and powerful and numerous economic actors, are often in conflict with the local populations. Indeed, WHRDs face significant challenges and risks as they strive to protect their communities and promote positive changes in the realm of human rights, especially in light of the exactions committed by extractive industry companies operating in the districts of Montepuez, Palma, and Balama.

It is against this backdrop that ISHR joined the Environmental Regional Agreement (ERA) coalition in calling on the Commission to work, in collaboration with defenders, on the drafting and adoption of a regional instrument for the protection of the environment and human rights, more particularly of environmental defenders. This instrument would play a central role in the protection of environmental human rights defenders and ensuring the efforts to mitigate and combat climate change are upheld.

I thank you.