REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MANDATE OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN AFRICA OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES’ RIGHTS

Theme: “Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Human Rights Defenders in Africa: 8 Years After”

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52nd Ordinary Session

Special 25th Anniversary of the African Commission

Yamoussoukro, 9 - 22 October 2012
INTRODUCTION


2. The report is part of the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights and essentially highlights the achievements of the mechanism of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa since its establishment in June 2004.

3. In this regard, the Special Rapporteur has not followed the usual format of presenting her half-yearly activity reports.

4. The first part of the report outlines the activities conducted between May and October 2012. In the second part, the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa presents an assessment of the achievements, challenges and future plans regarding the implementation of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur as stipulated in the aforementioned resolutions.
I. ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BETWEEN MAY AND OCTOBER 2012

5. During the abovementioned period, the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa undertook some promotion and protection activities as it has been the case since the establishment of the mechanism.

A. Activities to promote human and peoples’ rights

6. Promotion activities included the activity involving the Special Rapporteur regarding the study on freedom of association, the preliminary findings of which will be presented during this Session. In this regard, a working meeting was organised on this theme in Lomé, Togo, in May 2012 with members of the study group.

7. Other promotion activities undertaken by the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa included brainstorming meetings on current issues that are still of concern despite the various efforts made to improve the working conditions of human rights defenders in Africa. For example, a meeting was organised for human rights defenders from 15 to 16 May 2012 in Togo, in collaboration with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Togo, on the theme: “The Work of Human Rights Defenders in Togo: Code of Conduct for Human Rights Defenders”.

8. In the meantime, I was also able to conduct promotion activities in Togo as part of my mandate as Commissioner responsible for human rights promotion in the country. My report in this regard will be presented during the present Session.

9. I continued collaboration relations with my UN counterparts and other regional mechanisms. In this regard, the following three essential activities should be mentioned:

- Seminar-workshop on the risks and challenges faced by human rights defenders within the context of peaceful demonstrations, Oslo, Norway, 6 to 8 June 2012;
- Consultations between the UN Human Rights Council special procedures mandate-holders and members of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, Geneva, 13 June 2012;
Meeting of the Joint Working Group of UN and ACHPR special procedures on the follow up of the implementation of the Addis Ababa roadmap, Geneva, 15 June 2012.

B. Activities to protect the rights of human rights defenders

10. My protection activities mainly included individual cases of human rights violations that were reported. In this regard, I am including the various communications and press releases that I prepared as part of the achievements of the mechanism of the Special Rapporteur.

11. During the intersession period, I sent 8 communications with the aim of engaging dialogue with 4 States Parties on the various alleged cases of violations of the rights of human rights defenders. I also published 4 press releases, 2 on human rights violations and 2 on affirmative action for the release of human rights defenders.

12. My intention of doing this brief presentation is to show that the human rights situation of human rights defenders in Africa is still a source of major concern, and that in this regard, the mechanism of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa has the obligation to constantly monitor and report in order for all the relevant parties to understand the seriousness of its reported cases of violations.

II. THE MECHANISM OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS EIGHT YEARS AFTER

13. Since its establishment in 1987, the African Commission focused on the promotion and protection of human rights without making a distinction between the categories and generations of human rights. The Commission acted in compliance with the rights enshrined in the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights which was adopted in 1981 and entered into force in 1986.

14. The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights has since 1995 established the practice of special procedures as a result of the urgency of some human rights issues, not without the support of civil society, and also in implementation of Article 60 of the African Charter which stipulates that: “the Commission shall draw inspiration from international law on human and peoples’ rights, particularly from the provisions of various African instruments on human and
peoples’ rights, the Charter of the United Nations, the Charter of the Organization of African Unity, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, other instruments adopted by the United Nations and by African countries in the field of human and peoples’ rights as well as from the provisions of various instruments adopted within the Specialized Agencies of the United Nations of which the parties to the present Charter are members.”

15. The Rules of Procedure of the Commission as amended in 2010 defines as subsidiary mechanisms special procedures such as Special Rapporteurs, Committees and Working Groups. To date, the Commission has 13 subsidiary mechanisms and 12 are operational. The mechanism on extrajudicial executions is in a coma whereas the issue of enforced disappearances continues to grow at an alarming rate in Africa and is one of concern to the African Commission regarding the meaning stakeholders give to the right to life which is enshrined in the African Charter.

16. The mechanism of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa was established by Resolution ACHPR 69 (XXXV) 04 of 4 June 2004 and has continued to work until present. Before presenting the achievements at a time when we are commemorating the 25th anniversary of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, it is important to underscore the context in which the mechanism was established and the underlying reasons for its establishment.

A. Background and rationale for establishing the mechanism

17. In 1998 the UN General Assembly adopted by Resolution 53/144 the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, commonly called the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. The Declaration, inter alia, calls on governments, UN organs and agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations to step up their efforts towards publicizing the Declaration and promote the respect and understanding thereof throughout the world.

18. The United Nations later, by Human Rights Commission Resolution 2000/61 of April 2000, called for the establishment by the UN Secretary-General of a mechanism to protect human rights defenders. This became a reality in August 2000 with the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders (which became Special Rapporteur in 2007).
19. Human rights defenders play a very important role in the lives of people given that they deal with issues such as governance, democracy and the rule of law. They have also contributed significantly to the implementation of international and regional human rights legal instruments. However, paradoxically, they are the people who are mostly targeted by the attacks and retaliation of state and non-state actors in the sense that they are often misunderstood.

20. The mechanism of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders of the African Commission\(^1\) was also established on the initiative of civil society actors who, since the establishment of the African Commission, have worked with the latter in brainstorming on the appropriate strategies to help take into account the human rights challenges on our continent.

21. Civil society is mostly made up of human rights defenders and in this regard, it is important to retain a tentative definition of human rights defenders who, according to the United Nations, are people who, individually or with others, act to promote or protect human rights.\(^2\)

22. The conclusions of the colloquium that was held in Johannesburg in December 1998 on the situation of human rights defenders in Africa included, *inter alia*, the need to establish an effective mechanism for the promotion and protection of the rights of human rights defenders in Africa.

23. It should be noted that in Africa, the Grand Bay Declaration and the Kigali Declaration\(^3\) which feature prominently among AU legal instruments are a testimony to the recognition of human rights defenders by African leaders.

24. Resolution ACHPR 69 (XXXV) 04 of 4 June 2004 earlier mentioned was therefore the outcome of several efforts made by civil society actors and members of the African Commission. It outlines and defines the scope of implementation of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur.

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\(^1\) At its 35\(^{th}\) Ordinary Session held in Banjul from May to June 2004, the African Commission decided to have a Focal Point for Human Rights Defenders in Africa

\(^2\) See UN Fact Sheet No. 29, Page 2.

\(^3\) The Grand Bay Declaration was adopted in 1999 and the Kigali Declaration was adopted in 2003.
B. Mandate of the Special Rapporteur

25. Under the terms of Resolution ACHPR 69 (XXXV) 04 of 4 June 2004, the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa is to:

- Seek, receive, examine and act upon information on the situation of human rights defenders in Africa;
- Submit at every Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights a report on the situation of human rights defenders in Africa;
- Establish collaboration and dialogue with States Parties to the Charter, national human rights institutions, intergovernmental organisations, regional and international mechanisms, human rights defenders and other partners;
- Develop and recommend strategies to better protect human rights defenders and follow up on these recommendations;
- Promote and raise awareness about the implementation of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders in Africa.

26. In implementing this mandate, the Special Rapporteur carried out a number of activities, including:

- Receiving information on violations suffered by human rights defenders;
- Engaging dialogue with States by writing confidential communications which some people call letters of allegation;
- Publishing press releases on individual cases of violations received;
- Undertaking promotion missions with the aim of assessing the situation of human rights defenders in States Parties to the Charter;
- Organising consultations, conferences and seminars as part of the capacity building of human rights defenders, either through her own initiative or at the invitation of States, national human rights institutions and civil society organisations;
- Taking down recommendations on the manner in which States may implement the UN Declaration on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders and participating in meetings and conferences on human rights protection.

27. Following a strategic approach based on its 2006-2008/2012-2014 action plans, the mechanism of the Special Rapporteur took into account the need to collaborate and engage dialogue with the relevant stakeholders. The mechanism also made the commitment to prepare reports and make recommendations.
C. Implementation of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur

28. During the eight years since its establishment, the mechanism of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa has conducted a number of promotion and protection activities for human rights defenders. The Special Rapporteur increased the importance of inter-organ collaboration and has always been the backbone of this collaboration.\(^4\)

29. Since the beginning of her mandate characterised by synergy between the stakeholders, the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa has developed action strategies inspired by previous ones. She developed some working tools both in the promotion and protection of the human rights of human rights defenders.

(a) Promotion activities

30. The African Commission has tasked the Special Rapporteur with collaborating and engaging dialogue with all the relevant stakeholders. Her promotion activities are in line with this obligation and include relations with States Parties, NGOs, national human rights institutions and other partners.

➢ Relations with States Parties

31. With regard to formal activities, the Special Rapporteur has to date undertaken thirteen (13) promotion missions to eleven countries: Democratic Republic of Congo (1), Togo (3), Sudan (1), Libya (1), Tunisia (2), Cameroon (2), Senegal (1), Mauritania (1), Algeria (1) and Western Sahara (1), Uganda (1), etc. These missions enabled the Special Rapporteur to engage dialogue with the political actors of these States on the appropriate strategies to protect human rights defenders, discuss with human rights defenders on their capacity to work effectively, and ensure the promotion of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights.

\(^4\) In 2006 on the initiative of the International Service for Human Rights, she met with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders and they jointly prepared a roadmap for this inter-organ collaboration. As a result, the two mechanisms have undertaken two important joint missions: one to Togo in 2008, the very first mission undertaken by the two special procedures, and another one recently to Tunisia in 2012, the first mission between the UN and the ACHPR since the Arab Spring.
32. She also organised informal meetings with States Parties on the occasion of some activities with civil society actors. As such, in 2006 she was able to meet with the authorities of DRC. She also met with the authorities of Côte d’Ivoire, Burundi, Rwanda and Angola.

- Relations with non-governmental organisations and national human rights institutions

33. On several occasions, and at the invitation of non-governmental organisations and national human rights promotion institutions, the mechanism has participated in capacity-building seminars and conferences across the continent. These informal means of constant collaboration has enabled the mechanism to have a global view of the situation of human rights defenders and to provide its ad hoc opinion on current issues. The outcome of these meetings has an important impact on the half-yearly reports presented by the Special Rapporteur and helps to list the issues of concern.

34. In 2009, the Special Rapporteur organized a colloquium in collaboration with African human rights defenders networks to review the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and their activities in the aftermath of the 1998 Johannesburg Conference.

35. Since 2006, the Special Rapporteur placed her Mechanism under the banner of synergy with civil society actors and as such, in the absence of a competitive office to carry this out, she developed an effective communication network with Human Rights Defenders who were encouraged to work in networks. As a result of this strategy, today, there are four (4) sub-regional human rights defense groups in Africa. At the continental level, the Pan-African Network of Human Rights Defenders is gradually being consolidated.

- Promotion activities and capacity building of the Mechanism

36. To promote itself, the mechanism embarked on the production of working tools for human rights defenders. In August 2008, following a workshop, and in collaboration with several partners, the Special Rapporteur designed a

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5 A Network for East Africa and the Horn of Africa, a Network for Central Africa, a Network for West Africa, a Network for Southern Africa. The network for North Africa is being constituted.
working guide to enable human rights defenders to easily carry out their work. A training manual was also designed in simple language for human rights defenders and it contains key regional and international instruments applicable to human rights defenders. In the light of this, she presented the profile of a human rights defender and a code of conduct for HRDs.

37. To maintain the synergy between the Special Rapporteur and all the stakeholders, the former since 2006, produced a communication tool, a bulletin entitled “The Rapporteur’s Newsletter”. This Newsletter which is currently in its 7th Edition focuses more often on a topical subject which some HRDs pick up from burning issues or some important activities of the Rapporteur during the drafting stage. For instance, the 7th Edition centers on the right of HRDs to peaceful assembly in Africa. Other important themes such as the protection of female HRDs, freedom of expression, the notion of Human Rights Defender are all topics that have been treated previously in this Newsletter.

38. The Special Rapporteur carried out a number of sensitization and training activities for certain groups. In 2008, she organized a capacity building workshop for HRDs in the DRC on regional and international legal instruments in collaboration with some partners. In 2009, the Special Rapporteur organized a training workshop in Benin for primary and secondary school teachers on the work of the HRD.

39. Finally, within the context of promotion activities, the Special Rapporteur undertook actions in a unique way towards freedom of association. The resultant effect is the establishment of a Study Group on Freedom of Association which is tasked with preparing a study and a report on guidelines pertaining to the implementation of this freedom by States Parties to the Charter.

(b) Protection activities

40. Through her protection activities, the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders is implementing the obligation for engagement in constructive dialogue between the Commission and States Parties. At the same time, this is a very delicate activity as it touches mostly on violations of the rights of human rights defenders in the States Parties. The two ways by which the Special Rapporteur dialogues with the States or the entire Human Rights
Community are by means of communications (letters of allegation) and press releases.

- **Communications**

41. Communications are confidential letters sent by the Special Rapporteur to States Parties on alleged violations of the rights of human rights defenders. Since 2004, the Special Rapporteur has written 264 communications.

42. Generally, these communications touch on rights guaranteed by the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, but particularly, on civil and political rights. The Special Rapporteur notes that these allegations often denounce acts of judicial harassment, abductions, torture, arbitrary arrests, illegal detentions, killings of human rights activists and intimidations of all kind. These cases of violations are mostly found in conflict torn or post conflict countries but rarely in countries where there is relative peace and where there is a certain culture of the rule of law.

43. The Special Rapporteur notes that only 2% of these communications were the subject of responses from States to whom the communications were addressed.

- **Press releases and statements**

44. Press releases and statements are not confidential documents in that they are published automatically on the Commission’s website, either to inform all the Communities about known cases of human rights violations and other relevant cases or to commend a State for implementing a recommendation by the Special Rapporteur.

45. To date, the Special Rapporteur has issued 31 press releases and statements which touched on different kinds of breaches of the rights of HRDs, particularly on arbitrary arrests. The proportion of communications issued for the past eight years of existence of the Mechanism is higher than press releases.

46. These two protection tools assist in handling the situation of one or several human rights defenders as a result of information received by the Special Rapporteur from Human Rights Defense Organizations or families of victims of these violations.
(c) Cooperation activities between Organs

47. The Special Rapporteur’s Mechanism enjoys very close working relations with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders as well as the European and American Mechanisms tasked with promoting and protecting HRDs in their respective regions. There is a permanent platform for meetings. To date, the platform is in its 4th Edition. This is a reference to the Inter-Mechanism Meetings on Human Rights Defense.

48. These meetings are strategic as they foster the sharing of experiences between the United Nations and Regional Mechanisms. These are forums where strategies are developed for consolidating protection of human rights activists.

49. The joint missions undertaken to Togo particularly in 2008 and to Tunisia in 2012 are part of the process of implementing this cooperation which is beneficial to the Special Rapporteur’s Mechanism. In this connection, one may cite the Conferences in Cairo in April 2012 and in Oslo in June, 2012 which brought together the Special Rapporteurs of the Commission and the United Nations. Moreover, this cooperation has been in keeping with the extension of the cooperation existing between the Commission and the United Nations Human Rights Council within the context of the Special Procedures.

D. Achievements of the Mechanism

50. In the light of the above-mentioned activities, the Special Rapporteur notes that the Mechanism has made some achievements among which are the following:

- The continuous recognition of the Mechanism by all States Parties to the Charter as a result of the engagement in the form of constructive dialogue;
- The Mechanism is the forerunner to the communications procedure (Letters of Communication) in Africa;
- The Mechanism was able to identify problems peculiar to HRDs with the assistance of HRDs and other similar mandate holders;
- The mechanism got involved in anchoring the national and sub-regional networks and HRDs at the continental level. These networks are collaborating effectively with the mechanism;
The Mechanism is developing, in a strategic way, activities and tools for the promotion of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights through the use of publication and promotion missions;

The Mechanism is undertaking a policy of rapprochement with HRDs through the periodic meetings it organizes;

The strengthening of cooperation between the mechanism and its United Nations counterparts, that is the Special Rapporteur on HRDs, the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on Freedom of Association, the Functional Unit on Human Rights Defenders of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe, the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union by way of inter-mechanism meetings is a tool for strengthening the actions of the Special Rapporteur. This enabled her to collect data on topical issues such as freedom of association, right of peaceful demonstration, freedom of expression ……

The establishment of the Study Group on freedom of association has been a considerable tool for attaining a better understanding of the status of positive law in Africa in terms of freedom of association and in making recommendations as a means of improving the legislative framework;

The regular publication of the Rapporteur’s Newsletter is a potent communication channel for communication and exchanges with the actors and the promotion mechanism.

E. Key challenges

51. In spite of efforts made in the implementation of the mechanism, a lot of challenges still need to be addressed. The Special Rapporteur notes challenges peculiar to the mechanism and those which affect HRDs in particular.

52. On challenges relating to the implementation of the mechanism, the Special Rapporteur notes:

- The constant need for technical, material and financial assistance for the mechanism. Since the establishment of the mechanism, no specific
budget from the African Union has been allocated to it even as the need arises for effective implementation of the mechanism.

✓ The absence of responses from States regarding recommendations and communications forwarded to them within the context of protecting HRDs is a serious obstacle to the demonstration of truth and authentication of evidence that are reported to her. The Special Rapporteur continues to look for appropriate means to investigate alleged human rights violations of HRDs.

✓ The absence of responses from the States Parties to requests from promotion missions is also an impediment to the implementation of the Special Rapporteur’s Mechanisms, though an increasing number of States Parties open up to these visits.

53. On the challenges relating to the work of Human Rights Defenders, the Special Rapporteur notes:

✓ The difficult environment for the work of Human Rights Defenders

The Human Rights Defenders constantly work in a very difficult and often hostile socio-economic environment in view of the human rights violations identified in the context of communications and corroborative evidence collected (arrests, assassinations, judicial harassments, clampdowns on demonstrations etc.);

✓ Reprisals against Human Rights Defenders (particularly when they are witnesses to violations)

The African Commission recalled on several occasions in its previous resolutions the State Parties which need to take appropriate steps to halt reprisals against those who cooperate with the African system, in particular, the Mechanism of the Special Rapporteur. However, the Mechanism continues to receive cases of reprisals especially against Human Rights Defenders who collaborate with it. Some cases were even reported at this session.

✓ The restriction of the exercise of freedom of association and peaceful demonstration
The Special Rapporteur is highly concerned about the situation of Human Rights Defenders on issues relating to specific rights on the freedom of association and the right to peaceful demonstration. She observes that HRDs continue to suffer restrictions at the hands of some State Parties to the African Charter in the following areas;

✓ The lack of capacity of human rights defenders

The HRDs continue to meet the need of building their capacity in terms of knowledge of human rights legal instruments in general and those of the African system in particular. This state of affairs was confirmed on the occasion of the evaluation done by HRDs themselves during the forum held in the run-up to this present Session;

✓ The specific case of female Human Rights Defenders

The female Human Rights Defenders continue to face rights violations in an increasing manner just like their male counterparts. They are subjected to abuses in terms of rights relating to violence against women in their private and social lives before being subjected to religious restrictions in certain States, particularly political restrictions in some States Parties.

F. Future plans

54. The 2012-2014 plan of action of the Special Rapporteur has scheduled programmes for implementation under the mechanism and follow-up of certain activities already initiated. This plan of action is aimed at pursuing actions already taken and consolidating progress.

55. In line with this plan of action and in the light of what has been done so far, there is the need to project relevant actions in terms of prospects to address the above-mentioned challenges. In short, these prospects are categorized into two axes based on promotion and protection of human rights defenders as set out in Resolution ACHPR 69 (XXXV) 04 of 4 June 2004:

➢ Protecting the rights of human rights defenders

To this end, the Special Rapporteur plans to:
✓ Continue sending individual Communications to States and the publication of press releases to raise the awareness of stakeholders;
✓ Carry out an evaluation of the protection of human rights defenders by following-up on communications sent to States Parties;
✓ Establish a warning mechanism for cases of human rights violations of HRDs.

➢ The mandate to promote the rights of human rights defenders,

In this context, the Special Rapporteur plans to:
✓ Continue with and improve capacity-building activities of Human Rights Defenders, particularly, through the re-publication and updating of working tools of human rights defenders;
✓ Carry out an assessment of the work of human rights defenders with the aim of providing orientation for strategies of the Mechanism to improve their activities;
✓ Continue to collaborate with HRDs in order to identify the relevant subjects through training, sensitization measures and advocacy;
✓ Continue constructive dialogue with States Parties through promotion missions. This dialogue is a tool for preventing violations against Human Rights Defenders;
✓ Strengthen collaboration and cooperation with similar organs, in particular the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders; the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Association and similar regional special mechanisms. This will be done through inter-mechanism exchanges established since 2008, and also through Inter-Orga cooperation which promotes joint missions to the States Parties;
✓ Continue with the communication and information strategy by using the Newsletter “THE RAPPORTEUR’S NEWSLETTER” which still requires the expertise of HRDs and the support of financial and technical partners;
✓ Finalize the study on freedom of association;
✓ On the specific case of women defenders, pursue consultations with the stakeholders in order to produce a report on the situation.
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

56. By establishing the Special Rapporteur Mechanism in 2004, the African Commission had the intention of improving the rights of this target group of Human Rights Defenders. At the time of taking stock of the eight (8) years of implementation of the Mechanisms, and in view of the contents and conclusions of the 15 previous intersession reports produced by the Special Rapporteur to date at the African Commission, it is important to recognize that a lot of things have been done but a large number of challenges still remain.

57. Like the traveller in Saint Exupery’s work, it is important to pause, carry out an assessment of the journey covered and the journey ahead. The Special Rapporteur therefore noted that:

- The work of Human Rights Defenders for the past 25 years has had an amount of positive impact on the work of the African Commission. Human Rights Defenders remain unavoidable partners in view of the expertise that they bring to the Commission;
- The Mechanism is a relevant tool in the service of Human Rights Defenders in Africa;
- In recent years, actual progress has been observed owing to the work accomplished on the ground and outreach actions undertaken since its establishment in 2004.

58. In view of the observations outlined above, particularly regarding the challenges, the Special Rapporteur makes the following recommendations:

- To State Parties:
  - Implement the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and all the relevant instruments for the protection of HRDs by taking measures aimed at incorporating it into the legislative and regulatory framework;
  - Maintain a permanent and constructive dialogue with the Mechanism, notably, following the requests made for promotion missions and reacting with dispatch to recommendations made in the communications, declarations and other press releases;
  - Improve the socio-political environment with the aim of facilitating the work of HRDs, who in the final analysis, are necessary partners in the promotion and protection of human rights;
✓ Encourage the exercise of the rights of human rights defenders to peaceful demonstration through the adoption of laws that are more compatible with the free exercise of the right of assembly and freedom of association;
✓ Refrain from any forms of reprisals against those who collaborate with the African human rights protection system. Such reprisals necessarily impact negatively on the work of the Commission, and such an impact will not bring about any benefits to Human Rights Defenders where necessary.

➢ To Human Rights Defenders:

✓ Continue and promote capacity-building initiatives particularly through workshops, joint actions with the Mechanism and the establishment of networks for the dissemination of enhanced strategies for protecting their rights;
✓ Adhere to the ethics and code of conduct of human rights defenders;
✓ Continue constructive dialogue with States with the aim of improving their working environment, notably through their involvement in the process of legal reforms relating to rights and freedoms;

➢ To stakeholders:

✓ Continue to strengthen the mandate of the Mechanism, in particular, by providing all the necessary support.