



International Service for Human Rights
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Oral statement

Item 3, Interactive dialogue with Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

10 March 2009

Thank you Mr President,

The International Service for Human Rights warmly welcomes the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. We particularly welcome the focus of the report on the strategic value of the UPR as a mechanism that could potentially improve the situation of human rights defenders worldwide.

A recent statement issued by the Special Rapporteur together with other regional human rights mechanisms and representatives to mark the 10th anniversary of the Declaration on human rights defenders, establishes that “in every region of the world, defenders – and often their beloved ones – continue to be subjected to threats, killings, disappearances, torture and ill-treatment, arbitrary detention, surveillance, administrative and judicial harassment, defamation, and more generally, stigmatization by State authorities and non-State actors.[...] They face illegitimate restrictions on the exercise of their rights to freedom of opinion and expression, access to information, access to funding, and freedoms of association -including registration-, peaceful assembly, and movement. A climate of impunity for violations committed against defenders prevails in numerous countries of the world.”

In this context, the UPR process can be an important tool to monitor the situation of human rights defenders in the countries reviewed. This mechanism provides a useful opportunity for States to assess the implementation of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. It is also an opportunity to provide specific recommendations for ensuring a conducive environment for human rights defenders to be able to carry out their work.

In her report to the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur highlights a number of instances where the situation of human rights defenders could be more adequately addressed by the UPR and provides recommendations to enhance access and participation of human rights defenders in this mechanism. In this context, we would like to ask the Special Rapporteur to elaborate further on some of the following points:

- How can the Special Rapporteur assist States to ensure that information on the implementation of the Declaration is systematically included in the national reports? Have you considered the possibility of issuing guidelines on how to report on the implementation of each of the specific rights and freedoms included in the Declaration?
- How could the Special Rapporteur assist countries in ensuring inclusive participation of human rights defenders in the national consultation process?

- How can UPR recommendations more specifically address the implementation of the Declaration on human rights defenders?
- Civil society has an explicit role to play in the follow-up to the UPR. What specific role could defenders play in following up to the UPR process, both at the national and international level?
- Has the Special Rapporteur already identified any best practices on follow up to the recommendations?

Turning to the report from the mission to Togo, ISHR welcomes the joint visit of the Special Rapporteurs on Human Rights Defenders of the UN and the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights respectively to this country. This joint mission is a clear example of best practice in terms of cooperation between regional and the international human rights mechanisms.

- Does the Special Rapporteur think that this joint mission has had further impact on the situation of human rights defenders in Togo? Could you comment on any plans for follow up to this joint mission?

The International Service for Human Rights looks forward to continued close cooperation with the Special Rapporteur.