



**Statement of the International Service for Human Rights at the opening of the 45<sup>th</sup> ordinary session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Banjul, the Gambia**

International  
Service  
for Human  
Rights

Service  
International  
pour les Droits  
de l'Homme

Servicio  
Internacional  
para los Derechos  
Humanos

**Item 4**

Madam Chair, honourable Commissioners,

Africa like the entire world celebrated last year the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. The continent has seen important advancements in the promotion and protection of human rights. However, the situation remains critical.

Even though the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and all other regional human rights instruments recognise the role of civil society in the promotion and protection of human rights in the continent, we observe that in many countries in the region, human rights defenders face violations and obstacles in the pursuit of their mission and activities, including severe limitations to the exercise of their freedom of association and the rights to access to funding.

In some instances, restrictions are placed at the legislative level including burdensome administrative procedures for obtaining registration, bans on the establishment of human rights organisations as well as restrictions on the ability of civil society organisations to access to funding.

In other instances, the challenges to freedom of association are due to restrictive administrative practices including the denial of registration and the dissolution of human rights organisations.

The International Service for Human Rights invites the African Commission to urge Member States to bring their laws and practices into conformity with international standards on freedom of association and on the right to access funding in accordance with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, and to allow human rights organisations to carry out their activities free from undue influence and obstacles.

Human rights defenders continue to face threats and attacks in their daily work. The African Commission on Human and People 'Rights has an important role to play as a protection mechanism for defenders in the region. ISHR urges the African Commission to strengthen the mechanism included in the new interim rules of procedure dealing with urgent cases. This mechanism should include not only situation of massive violations, but also those urgent cases of Human Rights Defenders at risk.

I thank you!