

**STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE WITH THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON
ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS**

47th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

AGENDA Item 7

Madam Chairperson,

The International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) welcomes the work of the Working Group on economic, social and cultural Rights and commends the Commission for its full engagement in the promotion and protection of all rights in the pursuit of sustainable peace and development.

As you know, Mr. Special Rapporteur, human rights defenders working in economic social and cultural rights have the difficult task of promoting rights the justiciability of which remains problematic. For this reason in particular, the recognition by States of their activities as activities of human rights promotion and protection, as well as their own claim to act for the protection and promotion of human rights, remains a challenge. This challenge that is specific to defenders working in economic, social and cultural rights was recognized as such by the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders in its 2007 report. To meet this challenge, the Special Rapporteur has specifically called upon States to recognize the legitimacy of the promotional activities of these rights. The Special Rapporteur also stressed the need for States to protect human rights defenders in carrying out their activities, taking into account the specific challenges they face.

The ISHR would like to see joint activities between the States Parties and human rights defenders working on economic, social and cultural rights strengthen and to see consultation mechanisms put in place. As such, the ISHR calls upon the Commission, in its mission to promote human rights, to encourage States to involve those defenders in the adoption of strategies for the implementation of States' commitments in economic, social and cultural rights. Joint action between these parties is necessary for the realization of these rights, among which emphasis can be put on the right to education; right to health; right to water, sanitation and hygiene; and the right to property, which is the source of so many conflicts on the African continent.

The ISHR also calls upon the Commission to encourage Member States to engage defenders working on economic, social and cultural rights in its human rights training activities that are incumbent to States under the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. Human rights defenders are not only recipients but also providers of human rights education: therefore, a joint activity in this area would enable a coherent approach towards a sustainable peace and development initiated and decided by the individuals as rights-holders.

Question: As the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders and Chairman of the Working Group on economic, social and cultural rights, what strategy are you planning to implement to foster the recognition of the work of defenders in economic, social and cultural work as an activity of defense and promotion of human rights?

I thank you for your attention.

16 May 2010, Banjul