

**STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE WITH THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR
ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN AFRICA**

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

AGENDA Item 7

Madam Chairperson,

The International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) thanks the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders in Africa for his report and notes with appreciation the work accomplished during the intersessional period.

Mr. Special Rapporteur, since the adoption of the United Nations (UN) Declaration on Human Rights Defenders in 1998, significant advances were made to implement mechanisms to protect human rights defenders at international and regional levels. However, as you have seen from various statements of NGOs on the situation of human rights on the continent, the situation of human rights defenders remains critical in many African States Parties to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The right of every individual to form associations with others in order to promote and protect fundamental rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed by international and regional human rights is being undermined in some States Parties through the adoption of laws restricting freedom of association, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and movement, the right to receive money in order to promote and protect human rights, the right to access information etc. It is worth remembering that the guarantees of these rights allows human rights defenders to fulfill their mission of promotion and protection of human rights and provides them with the necessary information for assessing the periodic reports of States Parties.

The Resolution 13/13 that was adopted in March this year by the UN Human Rights Council recognizes the need to protect human rights defenders. In that respect, the Resolution calls upon states to ensure that their legislation conform to international human rights law in order to create an environment conducive to the work of human rights defenders. This innovative resolution calls upon states to put protection mechanisms in place in consultation with human

rights defenders, as well as focal points for human rights defenders and an early warning system within the government.

Question 1 - What strategy do you intend to implement to help states internalize the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and to put in place national mechanisms to protect HRD?

Cooperation between human rights mechanisms is needed to strengthen the mission of promotion and protection of each mechanism and is now a concern in the international system as well as in the regional system. Two years ago your predecessor and her UN counterpart took part in an interesting initiative of cooperation consisting in a joint visit to Togo.

Question 2 - What strategy do you intend to put in place to continue this cooperation and how would you expand it if possible?

I thank you for your attention.

16 May 2010, Banjul