

[SDGs | Defenders are indispensable to sustainable and inclusive development](#)

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At the inter-sessional meeting on human rights and the 2030 Agenda held today at the UN Human Rights Council, ISHR delivered a statement emphasising the vital role defenders play in the implementation of the SDGs.

Panelists and speakers from the floor also emphasised that participation and inclusion of human rights defenders is key to the realisation of the 2030 Agenda.

The underpinning of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in international human rights norms and standards was also emphasised. The Danish Institute for Human Rights introduced a [new tool](#) linking the SDGs to recommendations from UN human rights mechanisms.

Read the full statement below:

Human rights defenders are indispensable to sustainable and inclusive development, as well as addressing poverty and inequality. Their protection is central for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The Human Rights Council [recognised](#) their important role in supporting States to realise the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the pledge that no one will be left behind and to reach the furthest behind first.

The Council stressed that defenders must be ensured a safe and enabling environment to undertake their work free from hindrance and insecurity.

This is absolutely central for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Attacks and restrictions against defenders and civic space, including freedoms of expression, assembly and association, run contrary to this goal.

ISHR remains highly concerned that paradoxically, some of the States who champion the right to development are also States that systematically restrict, repress and attack economic, social and cultural rights defenders.

States who continue to restrict civic space are moving in the wrong direction.

In the political declaration of the high-level political forum, world leaders affirmed their commitment to “build peaceful, just and inclusive societies and to respect, protect and fulfil human rights”.

The SDGs are underpinned by legally binding human rights norms and standards.

Their implementation requires a human-rights based approach and an inclusive and participatory process that ensures equality, non-discrimination and the full and effective participation of the population.

Defenders and independent civil society engage with their communities, governments, and non-State actors to push for the realisation of all human rights, which includes the SDGs.

ISHR calls on:

- Governments to take immediate steps to empower defenders and include them in the processes for following-up and monitoring of the implementation of the SDGs.
- All UN agencies, including but not limited to UNDP, to treat the Declaration on human rights defenders as of much of a 'guiding star' for their work as the SDGs themselves.
- The UN Secretary-General to lead the development and ensure the accountable implementation of a system-wide policy on the promotion and protection of human rights defenders, such as that already adopted by UN Environment, as a vital component of contributing to implementation of the SDGs.

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