

Kampala Declaration of Human Rights Defenders

Johannesburg +10 Conference for HRDs
Kampala, 23 April 2009

We, 85 human rights defenders from 45 African States, and 33 partners from across the world, gathered at the All-Africa Human Rights Defenders Conference held in Kampala, Uganda from 20 to 23 April 2009, and hosted by the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net), in close collaboration with all other sub-regional networks:

Condemn the significant number of HRDs who have been killed in their efforts to promote and protect universal human rights since the All Africa Human Rights Defenders Conference of November 1998 held in Johannesburg;

Acknowledge the milestones achieved by human rights defenders (HRDs) and other stakeholders to assist and protect human rights defenders, since the Johannesburg All Africa Human Rights Defenders Conference of November 1998, where the participant HRDs had agreed to:

- identify challenges facing HRDs in Africa;
- train HRDs on all local, regional, international existing mechanisms;
- identify advocacy measures for their freedom of action;
- look into measures for their security;
- ask States to adopt legislation to protect HRDs, in particular women HRDs;
- urge the UN Committee on Human Rights to establish a mandate holder on HRDs;
- ask all inter-governmental bodies to protect HRDs;
- demand the United Nations (UN) to give priority to HRDs' consultation while carrying out its programmes and activities;
- mobilise the media;
- organise themselves in networks to respond urgently to human rights violations.

The milestones achieved since 1998 are the following:

- The appointment of a United Nations Special Rapporteur on HRDs and the adoption of a UN Declaration on HRDs;
- The appointment of a Special Rapporteur on HRDs at the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR);
- Increasing awareness of the work of HRDs;
- Adoption of several intergovernmental international and regional legal instruments, including the EU Guidelines on HRDs, and non-governmental action on protecting HRDs;
- Establishment of HRD regional networks in Africa, notably in the East and Horn of Africa, Southern Africa, Central Africa and West Africa.

Affirm the rights of HRDs to effectively continue their work in accordance with the UN Declaration on HRDs;

Acknowledge the contribution of the UN and ACHPR human rights protection mechanisms in their efforts to protect HRDs, including the practices of urgent communications and country visits, and their collaboration with NGOs and UN peacekeeping operations;

Remain deeply concerned by the challenges HRDs continue to face in the various sub-regions of Africa whose rights as defenders continue to be violated and to be subjected to summary execution, torture, arbitrary detention, legislative restrictions, unfair trials, harassment and stigmatization;

Remain particularly concerned by the threats against vulnerable HRDs including women HRD, HRDs working in armed conflicts areas or under oppressive regimes, journalists , lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) and minority rights activists;

Note the challenges of international and regional mechanisms in the field of HRDs' protection, and those mechanisms' shortcomings which include: few country visits, insufficient follow-up on HRD cases, insufficient capacity and inadequate or non-responsiveness by States on these cases.

And thus,

Decide to build on existing sub-regional networks and create new ones where needed, based on the lessons learned from existing ones;

Undertake an updated assessment of HRDs' needs in all Africa;

Design accordingly a national, regional, and international strategy for their protection, and strengthen national HRD coalitions and sub-regional networks to render them more dynamic and effective;

Agree to conduct trainings of HRDs in the following areas: international and regional intergovernmental protection mechanisms, security and protection, advocacy measures including media and communications strategies, project management and fundraising methods, and training of trainers locally;

Urge States, intergovernmental organisations, and non-governmental organisations to re-enforce their assistance and protection to HRDs, including protection grants, evacuation and relocation needs, family support, psycho-medical assistance, as well as legal assistance;

Urge States to respect the UN Declaration on HRDs, the Declaration of Kigali and the Declaration of Grand Baie and to ensure that domestic legislation is in conformity with their regional and international obligations;

Calls on States to bring an immediate end to harassment, intimidation, legislative affronts and attacks on HRDs;

Call upon the African Union to draft, under the auspices of the Special Rapporteur on HRDs of the ACHPR, and pass an additional protocol to the African Charter, which will protect and promote the rights of HRDs;

Call upon all African States to ratify and domesticate international and regional Human Rights instruments without reservations;

Ensure NGOs' active use of and close collaboration with the regional and international mechanisms;

Ensure that the EU Guidelines are respected and actively implemented in order to provide for the protection of HRDs, and to advocate for similar guidelines to protect HRDs to be drafted by other States and regional entities; ;

Call upon cooperation partners to give long term financial support to national and sub-regional HRD NGOs in order for them to function effectively;

Decide to pay particular attention to vulnerable HRD groups; including women HRD, those working in conflict situation or oppressive regimes, as well as LGBTI and minority rights activists;

Resolve to establish a Steering Committee composed of five sub-regional network focal points and four representatives of special interest groups. This committee will be tasked to oversee and implement the Kampala Plan of Action (KAPA), once it has been adopted. This committee will also work on the effective implementation of the Pan-African Human Rights Network;

Invite the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP) to establish a Secretariat that will be in charge of the implementation of the KAPA.

Done in Kampala, 23 April 2009