

**83rd ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON
HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS**

REPORT

Presented by

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Commissioner and Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders

Focal Point on Retaliation in Africa

Focal Point on Judicial Independence

Country Rapporteur for: Algeria, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Mali and Togo.

Banjul, 2 to 22 May 2025

INTRODUCTION

1. This report is submitted pursuant to Rules 25(3) and 64 of the Rules of Procedure (2020) of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (the Commission) and gives an account of the activities for the promotion and protection of human rights undertaken during the intersessional period since the 81st Ordinary Session held in Banjul, The Gambia, from 17 October to 6 November 2024.
2. The report is divided into five main parts. In the first, it presents the activities carried out in our capacity as Focal Point on judicial independence, in accordance with Resolution ACHPR/Res.570 (LXXVII) 2023 on the appointment of a Focal Point on judicial independence in Africa, adopted by the Commission at its 77th Ordinary Session.
3. The second deals with the initiatives taken as Country Rapporteur responsible for monitoring the human rights situation in Algeria, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Togo
4. The third part of the report describes the activities carried out under the mandate of Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders and Focal Point on reprisals in Africa (the Special Rapporteur) established by Commission Resolution ACHPR/69(XXXV)04. This mandate was extended to include the issue of reprisals by Resolution ACHPR/Res.273 (LV)2014. It was renewed by Resolutions ACHPR/Res.83(XXXVIII)05, ACHPR/Res.125(XXXII)07, ACHPR/Res.149(XLVI)09, ACHPR/Res.202(L)2011, ACHPR/Res.248(LIV)2013, ACHPR/Rés.315(LVII)2015, ACHPR/Rés.381(LXI)2017, ACHPR/Rés.425 (LXV) 2019, ACHPR/Rés.451 (LXVI) 2020 and ACHPR/Rés.526 (LXXIII) 2022.
5. In the fourth, it reports on the progress of the African Declaration on the Promotion of the Role of Human Rights Defenders and their Protection in Africa, in accordance with Resolution ACHPR/Res.432(LXV)2019
6. The fifth part provides a brief analysis of the situation of human rights defenders and of freedom of association and assembly. It also reports on my activities as Focal Point on Reprisals in Africa.

7. The final part contains recommendations for the various actors interacting with the mandate of Special Rapporteur.

PART I
ACTIVITIES UNDER THE FOCAL POINT ON JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

8. In my capacity as Focal Point on Judicial Independence, pursuant to Resolution ACHPR/Res.570 (LXXVII) 2023 on the appointment of a Focal Point on Judicial Independence in Africa, adopted by the Commission at its 77th Ordinary Session, I have been closely monitoring the situation of judicial independence in Africa. To this end, a number of initiatives and activities have been undertaken, including sending a letter of urgent appeal (A), issuing a press release (B), and participating in the African Summit of Judges and Lawyers (C).

A. Urgent Appeals on the alleged violation of judicial independence in Uganda

9. Together with the Commissioner responsible for monitoring the human rights situation in Uganda, the Honourable Commissioner Mudford Zecharia Mwandenga, we sent a letter of urgent appeal to the High Authorities of Uganda on 24 March 2025 in which we expressed our concern about reports of alleged violations of judicial independence, the security of legal professionals and the trial of civilians by military courts.
10. In particular, we have called on the Ugandan authorities to take all necessary legislative and other measures to create an environment in which legal professionals can carry out their professional duties without hindrance or interference.

B. Press release on the occasion of the commemoration of the International Day of Endangered Lawyers

11. I issued a press release to mark International Day of Endangered Lawyers, which is celebrated on 24 January every year since 2009. I paid tribute to the commitment of lawyers, particularly those providing pro bono services, whose selfless

dedication and noble initiative enable thousands of indigent victims to gain access to justice.

12. I reiterated the importance of protecting and defending the rights of lawyers, the violation of which constitutes a real threat to access to justice, fundamental rights and the very foundations of the rule of law. To this end, I urged States Parties to the Charter and other stakeholders to redouble their efforts to create a working environment in which lawyers can exercise their profession freely, without fear or intimidation.

C. Participation in the Webinar to commemorate International Lawyers' Day, 24 January

13. I took part in a webinar organised on 24 January 2025 by the Pan-African Lawyers' Union (PALU) to commemorate International Lawyers' Day. The theme of the webinar was: "Justice at risk: the challenges and resilience of lawyers in protecting human rights".
14. The aim of the Webinar was to highlight the challenges faced by lawyers in defending human rights, with a particular focus on Africa and a broader examination of global trends. It provided a platform for discussion and exchange on the continuing and emerging challenges that threaten the integrity and independence of the legal profession, as well as on appropriate solutions for the effective promotion and protection of their rights.
15. On that occasion, I made a statement in which I expressed the Commission's concern at the alarming increase in violations of the rights of lawyers on our continent because of their defence of human rights. I also highlighted the Commission's initiatives in this area and made recommendations to the various stakeholders to better promote and protect of rights lawyers.

Judicial independence in Africa

16. The situation of judicial independence continues to deteriorate in some countries on the continent. There are increasing attacks on the independence of judges, who are under immense pressure from the State to deviate from their professional obligations under threat of unfair dismissal or arbitrary prosecution. This situation has serious consequences for the rule of law and people's right to a fair trial

17. The Commission is also concerned about acts of intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention of lawyers, and even their killing, especially those defending sensitive cases. This is a major challenge that prevents lawyers from working independently
18. I urge the States Parties to take appropriate measures to guarantee judicial independence and to implement the Commission's Guidelines on the Right to a Fair Trial.
19. The Commission has been informed of the situation of confusion in certain countries, leading to tensions between the Minister of Justice and the President of the High Council of the Judiciary. It has also received reports of tensions between parliaments and the highest courts, in particular the Constitutional Courts. This is the case in the Democratic Republic of Congo and other countries.
20. Various reports from different sources indicate that in some countries, the Ombudsman Institution has powers of control over the Constitutional Courts and can evaluate their performance. This is, for example, the case in Burundi.

Outcome 1: States and other stakeholders have been alerted to the situation of human rights and judicial independence in our continent.

Recommendations 1: Calls on States to :

- Strictly respect for the separation of powers and guarantee judicial independence for the proper administration of justice;
- Take the necessary measures to ensure that civilians are not tried by military courts or any other non-judicial bodies other than those duly established by law.

PART II
ACTIVITIES AS COMMISSIONER-COUNTRY RAPPORTEUR

21. In my capacity as Commissioner-Rapporteur responsible for monitoring the human rights situation in the States Parties of Algeria, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Togo, I have undertaken a number of actions concerning the following States Parties
22. With regard to **the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria**, on 4 April 2025 I sent two letters of urgent appeal concerning the arrest and detention of Mr. Boualem Sansal, an 80-year-old Franco-Algerian writer, who was arrested on 16 November 2024 on charges of undermining the integrity of the national territory and restricting trade union freedoms in the country. On all these occasions, I expressed the Commission's concerns and made recommendations to the States concerned.
23. The Commission thanks the Algerian Government for its reply dated 29 April 2025 and the useful clarifications it provided on the situation of the trade unions referred to in the letter and on the legislative and other measures adopted by the State Party over the years to guarantee the rights of trade unions operating in Algeria.
24. Concerning the **Republic of Mali**, I sent a letter of urgent appeal on 14 March 2025 concerning Mr Alou Badra Sacko, a Malian human rights defender who was abducted in Bamako on 14 March 2025 by armed and hooded men in an unregistered vehicle. I have taken note of the climate of repression against dissident voices, in particular political leaders, activists and journalists.
25. Together with the Honourable Commissioner Idrissa Sow, Chairperson of the Working Group on the Death Penalty, Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Africa, we sent a joint letter of urgent appeal to the country's authorities on 2 May 2025 concerning allegations of extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances of dozens of men, mostly from the Fulani community, following their arrest by the Malian Armed Forces at a market in Sebabougou, in the Kayes region on 12 April 2025.

26. In this respect, we specifically requested that appropriate measures be taken to locate the missing persons and conduct impartial and independent investigations to identify and bring to justice the perpetrators of the various violations.
27. With regard to **the Togolese Republic**, I sent a letter of urgent appeal concerning the allegations of the arbitrary arrest and detention of Françoise Affiavi Agba, her son Eddy Agba and her brother-in-law Cyrille Agba, all accused of conspiracy against national security and financing terrorism. On that occasion, I called on the State to ensure that the physical integrity of the detainees and the guarantees of a fair trial were respected.
28. With regard to the **Republic of Cameroon**, on 23 January 2025, I issued a press release on the situation of freedom of association and assembly, in particular, in the Republic of Cameroon. I deplored the suspension of the activities of the Central African Human Rights Defenders Network (REDHAC) for three (3) months, a decision which remains in force today. I underscored the Commission's concern about this measure, which affects the whole of Central Africa, as this organisation has sub-regional competence.
29. On 4 April 2025, I also sent a letter of urgent appeal to the Cameroon authorities concerning allegations of violations such as harassment, intimidation and threats against human rights defenders, in particular the leaders of REDHAC, and its suspension.
30. Following these allegations, I held working meetings with the Government of Cameroon, led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, H.E. Felix Mbayu, on the sidelines of the 83rd Ordinary Session. He informed the Commission of the main reasons for the suspension of certain NGOs operating in Cameroon, which do not comply with national legislation on the functioning of associations, financing and the fight against terrorism, thereby undermining the sovereignty of the country. Following discussions and based on our request, a working meeting will be held with the Minister for Territorial Administration in Yaoundé, at a date to be determined once authorisation has been granted, in order to take stock of relations between the government and civil society organisations and to provide the Commission with further information.

31. Concerning the **Republic of Côte d'Ivoire**, I sent a letter of urgent appeal to the country's authorities regarding the allegations of the arbitrary arrest, detention and sentencing of Mr Ghislain Assy Duggary, a trade unionist from the Mouvement des Enseignants pour la Dynamique de la Dignité, following his participation in the teachers' strike demanding the payment of a quarterly incentive bonus as enjoyed by other Ivorian civil servants. I stressed the need to implement adequate guarantees to ensure the full independence and protection of trade unionists and human rights defenders against reprisals related to their professional and legitimate activities.

Outcome 2: The senior authorities of these countries (Algeria, Mali, Cameroon, Togo and Cote d'Ivoire) have been alerted and made aware of the allegations of human rights violations against them.

Recommendations 2

- Urge the States concerned to conduct investigations with a view to locating and releasing abducted and missing persons.
- Refrain from all forms of intimidation and harassment, including judicial harassment, of human rights activists and defenders and ensure that they can carry out their human rights activities without hindrance or fear of reprisals.
- Adopt a specific law on the protection of human rights defenders.

PART III ACTIVITIES AS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND FOCAL POINT ON REPRISALS IN AFRICA

A. PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Participation in the Webinar on the launch of the report "*Civic space and human rights defenders in the Sahel: regional convergence of repression practices*", 20 February 2025

32. I took part in the Webinar organised on 20 February 2025 by the International Federation for Human Rights and the World Organisation Against Torture during the launching of the report "*Civic space and human rights defenders in the Sahel: regional convergence of repressive practices*".

33. On this occasion, we discussed the situation of human rights defenders and civic space in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad.

Outcome 5: Draw the attention of the various stakeholders to the situation of human rights defenders in the Sahel region and propose recommendations.

Recommendation 5: Implement the recommendations to improve the situation of human rights defenders and civic space in the Sahel.

B. PROTECTION ACTIVITIES

I. Urgent appeals

34. During the reporting period, the Mechanism received complaints of alleged violations of the rights of human rights defenders, which it followed up in a manner appropriate to the specific needs of each case. Thus, during the period under review, nine (9) letters of urgent appeal were sent to the States Parties of: Algeria (2), Cameroon (1), Côte d'Ivoire (1), Ethiopia (1), Libya (1), Mali (1), Niger (1) and Togo (1), sometimes jointly with other mechanisms or country rapporteurs.

35. These complaints concern allegations of human rights violations relating in particular to :

- Arbitrary arrest and detention of human rights activists and defenders ;
- Violations of trade union freedoms ;
- Judicial harassment, reprisals and intimidation of human rights defenders ;
- Abductions and enforced disappearances of human rights defenders ;
- Suspension of civil society organisations.

36. I also issued press releases, either individually or jointly with other mechanisms, notably on the situation of human rights defenders in Cameroon and Ethiopia and on the killing of Mr. Delphin Katembo Vinywasiki, an artist, musician and human rights defender, and several other young people in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The content of these press releases is available on the Commission's website.

II. State responses

37. During the intersessional period, the Mechanism received a response from the Algerian authorities, as indicated above. It also received a response from the authorities of Burkina Faso regarding the previous intersessional report on allegations of the abduction and murder of two lawyers. They stressed that the lawyers had been found alive and released by the defence and security forces in November 2024.

Outcome 9: Draw the attention of the States Parties concerned to the adoption of appropriate measures to remedy the alleged violations, should they prove to be true.

Recommendation 9: Respond to the letters of urgent appeal sent by the Mechanism, for those who have not yet done so, and take appropriate measures to prevent and fight against human rights violations.

PART IV DRAFTING AN AFRICAN DECLARATION ON PROMOTING THE ROLE OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND THEIR PROTECTION IN AFRICA

38. During the reporting period, the Special Rapporteur incorporated contributions received from the various stakeholders during consultations. He continues to work on drafting this document with a view to improving its quantitative and qualitative content.

Outcome 10: The text has been extensively revised.

Recommendation 10: Support and collaboration from all stakeholders.

PART V ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN AFRICA

39. An enabling national legal framework is an essential element in ensuring a safe and conducive environment for the work of human rights defenders, as set out in numerous international and regional instruments, including the absence of laws and practices that restrict and criminalise their work, and the adoption and effective implementation of laws and measures that guarantee their support and protection.
40. The situation of human rights defenders has improved in some countries, while in others it continues to deteriorate. Below, I provide an overview of the situation of human rights defenders, of freedom of association and assembly, of freedom of expression and the issue of reprisals in a number of countries.

A. FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY IN AFRICA

41. Freedom of association, assembly and peaceful demonstration are essential rights for collective expression and the defence of all human rights.
- As regards positive developments, the Mechanism noted in particular the adoption by the National Assembly of the Central African Republic of the law on the "Promotion and Protection of Human Rights Defenders".
42. Areas of concern identified by the Mechanism included the following:
- The decision by the Cameroonian authorities to suspend and terminate the activities of REDHAC and the ReachOut Association;
 - The decision by the Ethiopian Coordinating Authority for Civil Society Organisations to suspend certain civil society organisations, in particular Lawyers for Human Rights, the Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia, the Centre for the Advancement of Rights and Democracy, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council Organisation, and the Ethiopian Human Rights Defenders Centre;
 - Escalating violations of the rights of human rights defenders, marked by the systematic repression of environment activists, journalists and the political opposition in Uganda ;
 - The arrest of a dozen people during a peaceful rally in Cairo, Egypt in February 2025 ;

- The promulgation of the Private Voluntary Organisations Act No. 1/2025 in Zimbabwe, some amendments to which are likely to restrict civic space by vesting extensive powers in the government to monitor, control and punish NGOs;
- The use of force to disperse a peaceful demonstration against slavery in Nouakchott, Mauritania in February 2025;
- The use of lethal force to disperse the King Joy workers' meeting in Liberia;
- The suspension for several weeks of the activities of NGOs working with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Libya;
- The repression and excessive use of force, sometimes lethal, to quell demonstrations in some countries, sometimes resulting in loss of life, injuries and mass arrests of demonstrators;
- The arbitrary arrest and detention of trade union activists in some countries, notably Côte d'Ivoire;
- The continued requirement in some countries of prior authorisation for all demonstrations, despite the existence of a declaratory system governing the exercise of this freedom;
- Bans on demonstrations, particularly by opposition political parties and other dissenting voices, especially during election periods;
- Administrative delays in the legal registration of human rights associations and NGOs in certain countries;
- The persistence of legislative frameworks and legal restrictions that severely hamper the work of civil society associations and organisations in certain States, despite the States Parties' commitment to respect and guarantee human rights without discrimination;
- The politicisation of civil society organisations and the work of human rights defenders ;
- The absence of specific legislation and other legal mechanisms to protect human rights defenders in most countries, which paves the way for violations of the rights of HRDs and increases their vulnerability;
- The continued use of health or security emergency measures by some States to unduly restrict the freedoms (rights) of association and assembly, particularly for opposition political actors, civil society and human rights defenders.

43. The Commission recalls and encourages the use of its Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly in Africa which it adopted to assist States, including policy-makers, drafters and legislators, to ensure that legislation, policies and

administrative practices are in line with best practices and international standards and that measures do not unjustifiably infringe upon the freedoms of association and assembly.

44. It also recalls the important role of national courts in guaranteeing freedom of association and assembly.

B. THE ISSUE OF REPRISALS ON THE MAINLAND

45. Acts of reprisal are still widespread and take various forms, including murders, assassinations, systematic harassment, undue restrictions on access to meetings of human rights bodies, various threats, physical violence and other abuses, unjustified restrictions on the activities of civil society organisations, espionage, break-ins to the headquarters of organisations and associations, defamation, suspension of accreditation, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and repeated trials.
46. These cases of reprisals are practically the same throughout the continent, with varying degrees of seriousness from one country to another. I quote in particular
- The murder of Delphin Katembo Vinywasiki, a musician and human rights activist in the Democratic Republic of Congo;
 - The increasing number of reprisals and attacks on life in South Africa, including the murders of Imam Muhsin Hendricks, a defender of the rights of sexual minorities, and Pamela Mabini, a whistle-blower and human rights activist.
47. I call on States to investigate threats and acts of intimidation against human rights defenders and to ensure that the alleged perpetrators are brought to justice and that rights activists and victims obtain justice and adequate reparation.
48. In accordance with the mandate entrusted to the Mechanism on the issue of reprisals, we will pursue our efforts to prevent and combat reprisals against human rights defenders who cooperate or attempt to cooperate with the African Commission.

PART VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. CONCLUSIONS

49. I continue to deplore the alarming situation of human rights defenders on the continent. The number of complaints received by the Mechanism remains unchanged, but complaints are regularly received from some countries more than from others, the veracity of which the Mechanism tries to verify before contacting the State concerned. In this regard, I would like to stress that the follow-up to our urgent appeals remains a major challenge, both in terms of the actual reception by States and the implementation of our recommendations.

50. In terms of its activities, the mandate continues to work with States on a range of issues, including :

- The proper application of human rights norms and standards with respect to human rights defenders, in particular through recommendations on State reports, country visits, fact-finding missions, urgent appeals and other means;
- The adoption of legislation to protect human rights defenders and, in this regard, it reiterates its willingness to accompany them at the various stages of the adoption of such legislation;
- The implementation of the various soft law standards relating to the promotion and protection of the rights of human rights defenders.

51. The Mechanism finalised and submitted its draft Guidelines for the preparation of State reports on Articles 10 and 11 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, namely the rights to freedom of association and assembly in Africa, which were adopted by the Commission at its 82nd Ordinary Session held virtually from 25 February to 11 March 2025.

52. It is proceeding with the preparation of the study to assess the degree of conformity of national legislation with the Guidelines on Freedom of Association and of Assembly in Africa. A detailed report on legislation and policies that restrict public freedoms and limit the role and scope of civil society actors will be presented in due course.

53. The Mechanism will also continue to improve the Tracker on Freedom of Association and Assembly in Africa, a transparent and objective tool that will be made available to the public by the Special Rapporteur, thanks to the technical support provided by his Support Group for the Promotion and Monitoring of the Effective Implementation of the Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly in Africa.

54. To this end, the Mechanism will also continue to play a leading role in the drafting of the African Declaration on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights Defenders.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

55. The recommendations made in our previous reports remain valid. The mandate would like the States Parties and the various stakeholders, including civil society, to take them on board and work towards their effective implementation.

⌘ To the States Parties :

- i. Develop, adopt and implement more robust and adequate national laws, policies and programmes for the protection of human rights defenders, following the example of Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger in West Africa and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Central Africa;
- ii. Ensure that administrative, judicial and security authorities are familiar with the laws on human rights defenders, with a view to eliminating all forms of restrictions on their work;
- iii. Ensure that the mechanisms established for the protection of human rights defenders are inclusive and include civil society representatives;
- iv. Ensure that draft legislation on the protection of human rights defenders is in line with regional and international standards and with the Model Law on the Recognition and Protection of Human Rights Defenders in order to create a legal environment conducive to their work;
- v. Ensure that the review of counter-terrorism legislation complies with relevant regional and international standards and the Principles and Guidelines on Human and Peoples' Rights in the Fight in countering Terrorism in Africa adopted by the Commission in 2015;

- vi. Refrain from adopting repressive legislation aimed at restricting civic space and the legitimate activities of human rights defenders to promote and defend human rights;
- vii. Adopt specific legislation to address the protection of environmental rights defenders or in situations of health and security crises or other continental or global crises;
- viii. Raise awareness and build the capacity of various stakeholders, including human rights defenders, with regard to laws and regulations for the promotion and protection of human rights;
- ix. Take all appropriate measures to ensure that defenders are able to carry out their activities in conditions of safety, free from any threat to their physical and moral integrity;
- x. Pay particular attention to the situation of women human rights defenders, which is a matter of constant concern to the Special Rapporteur mechanism;
- xi. Refrain from deregistering NGOs and civil society organisations working for the promotion and protection of human rights, and strengthen civic and democratic space by promoting freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly for all human rights defenders;
- xii. Ensure that the measures taken by States to combat terrorism and illicit financial flows are consistent with the African Commission's Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa and the Principles and Guidelines on Human and Peoples' Rights in Countering Terrorism in Africa;
- xiii. Establish adequate mechanisms to compensate human rights defenders for damages suffered in the course of their work;
- xiv. Engage in dialogue and consultation with human rights defenders, and publicly recognise and support their work through communication and information campaigns;
 - x. Encourage community organisations and avoid registration bureaucracy that prevents citizens from enjoying the benefits of the African Charter;
 - xi. Encourage and promote the organisation of the work of defenders into associative networks at national, sub-regional and continental level;
 - xii. Respond more proactively to allegations of violations of the rights of defenders by my Mechanism and the other mechanisms of the Commission.

⌘ To the African Union and other regional and sub-regional bodies :

- i. Recognise the essential role of human rights defenders in the effective implementation of democratic principles, the rule of law, good governance and sustainable development in Africa;
- ii. Encourage Member States and the organs of the African Union to conduct awareness-raising campaigns on the fundamental role played by human rights defenders;
- iii. Create a space for dialogue between States, human rights defenders and other key actors on challenges, best practices and progress in the protection of human rights defenders;
- iv. Promote and support full collaboration between national, regional and international human rights mechanisms.

⌘ To National Human Rights Institutions :

- i. Fully exercise their promotion and protection mandates to hold States accountable for violations committed against human rights defenders and intervene in support of defenders who are victims of human rights violations;
- ii. Establish internal mechanisms for the protection of human rights defenders within the institution and ensure that they are adequately resourced and actively engaged with all human rights defenders;
- iii. Widely disseminate the Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly in Africa, monitor their implementation and share relevant information with our Mechanism.
- iv. Pursue the initiatives to hold the Forum of NHRIs on a regular basis as a prelude to the sessions of the Commission.

⌘ To civil society organisations :

- i. Continue to cooperate with national, regional and UN mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights, in order to prevent and respond to human rights violations committed against populations and human rights defenders;
- ii. Avoid focusing solely on the fulfilment of certain human rights (such as the right to freedom of assembly) to the detriment of others (the right to life; economic, social and cultural rights; and collective rights) and seek to

maintain the necessary balance so that the fulfilment of certain rights does not lead to the destruction of others;

- iii. Establish and strengthen networks of national and regional advocates to promote cooperation and cross-sectoral approaches that build alliances with diverse groups;
- iv. Develop innovative approaches to involve the general public, political actors and other opinion leaders, including the media, in the work of human rights defenders;
- iv. Comply with applicable laws and regulations and carry out their activities in accordance with the international, regional and national texts established for this purpose;
- iv. Avoid the political instrumentalization of their activities and contribute to the mutual strengthening of each other's capacities;
- v. Widely disseminate the Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly in Africa and monitor their implementation, and share relevant information with our mechanism.
- vi. Pursue their activities in the promotion and defence of human rights and engage in constructive dialogue with the various stakeholders.

⌘ To the media

- i. Engage in dialogue with all human rights defenders and support their efforts to promote human rights, the rule of law, social change and development;
- ii. Work in solidarity with human rights defenders to enable them to be adequately informed and to inform the public.

⌘ To religious and traditional leaders

- i. Strive to overcome obstacles to the work of human rights defenders and civil society organisations, in particular access to communities;
- ii. Endeavour to prevent negative practices that discriminate against women defenders and human rights defenders working with people who are criminalised and/or discriminated against, such as sex workers, people living with HIV and people of diverse sexual orientations and identities.

⌘ Technical and financial partners

- i. While thanking them for their continued support, I encourage them to continue to assist the Mechanism, States Parties, national institutions and civil society in their efforts to better promote and protect the rights of human rights defenders.

