

The Accra NHRIs and HRDs Declaration

Accra Declaration and Plan of Action for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders between the National Human Rights Institutions in Africa and Human Rights Defenders

First Consultative Meeting – held in Accra, Ghana, 5th – 6th December 2022.

PREAMBLE

1. We, the Participants at the first consultative meeting between National Human Rights Institutions in Africa (NHRIs), human rights defenders and civil society organisations, convened by The Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network (AfricanDefenders), the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (DefendDefenders), the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Ghana and the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI), held in Accra, Ghana, from 5 to 6 December 2022; to follow up on [the Marrakech Declaration](#) adopted by the Global Alliance for National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) in 2018;
2. **Recalling** the [United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms](#) (The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders) of 1998, the [Grand Bay \(Mauritius\) Declaration and Plan of Action, 1999](#) adopted by the OAU Ministerial Conference on Human Rights, and the [Kigali Declaration, 2003](#) adopted by the African Union (AU) Ministerial Conference on Human Rights in Africa;
3. **Further recalling** the Marrakech Declaration and the commitments contained therein on the protection of human rights defenders, with a particular focus on the situation of women human rights defenders;
4. **Concerned** that many NHRIs continue to operate amidst funding constraints, increased self-censorship as a result of narrowing civic space and deterioration of the state of rule of law, disregard for its orders and directives, lack of open and public consultation process with civil society organisations during the appointment of members / commissioners, among other challenges that impede the functions of the NHRIs.
5. **Deeply concerned** that many human rights defenders continue to be targeted in reprisal attacks because of their human rights work and perpetrators often escape accountability as well as actions taken by some States that often weaken and restrict the

constitutional mandate, autonomy and independence of the national human rights institutions;

6. **Acknowledging** that members and staff of the NHRIs are human rights defenders by the virtue of their mandate entrusted to them by their respective constitutive documents.

7. **Noting** the commitment of the AU member states articulated in the Grand Bay (Mauritius) Declaration to implement the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders; and the obligations of state parties to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Paris Principles, and the UN Declaration on human rights defenders to guarantee freedoms of assembly, association, protest, and expression of human rights defenders.

We Resolve To:

- a) Enhance trust between NHRIs and HRDs by increasing engagements aimed at promoting awareness about the mandate of NHRIs as established in the constitutive documents and [the Paris Principles](#) and accountable execution of the said mandates, towards a deeper appreciation of the mandate.
- b) Recognize the importance of, and convene, regular inclusive and substantive consultation engagements between NHRIs and HRDs networks in an environment of mutual partnership, cooperation, and candid reflections, in a periodic manner.
- c) Increase partnership between NHRIs and HRDs networks in the efforts to champion the institution of progressive, enabling laws, policies, regulations and practices and ratify regional and international human rights instruments aimed at creating enabling environment for the operation of civil society organisations and the protection of HRDs.
- d) Increase collaboration between NHRIs and HRDs networks to establish and efficiently implement robust early warning and protection systems for HRDs within the mandate of NHRIs. Where strategic, bilateral and/or multilateral memorandum of understandings should be signed between NHRIs and AfricanDefenders/DefendDefenders to guide the partnership.
- e) Strengthen systems and increase capacities within NHRIs to specifically monitor and document incidents of violation and abuse of rights of HRDs and track trends and patterns for evidence-based action. The findings of the monitoring and documentation activities should be made public for transparency.

- f) NHRIs should establish / strengthen complaint management and investigation systems that track violations and abuse of rights of HRDs and hold regular engagements with HRDs to review performance for purposes of recognizing progress and improving the system.
- g) Conduct joint actions aimed at increasing awareness among government officials and the public on the importance of the specific and crucial roles played by NHRIs and HRDs especially women human rights defenders in the promotion and protection of human rights.
- h) NHRIs should adopt a consultative process leading up to the publication of their annual and incident human rights reports. Particularly, NHRIs should invite HRDs / HRD networks and coalitions to a consultative session to reflect on the draft report for purposes of sharing feedback and comments for consideration before publication of final human rights reports.
- i) Increased cooperation at the local / national level between HRD coalitions / networks / organisations and NHRIs. In particular, NHRIs are encouraged to offer any support requested by HRDs in the course of their work, in line with their mandate.
- j) Call on AfricanDefenders/Defenddefenders to provide expertise and technical support where needed to African National Human Rights Institutions in establishing strong alert and protection mechanisms aiming at addressing issues partnering the work of human rights defenders, by tracking trends and providing policy briefs for sustainable redress mechanisms.
- k) Call on NHRIs and NANHRI to provide appropriate support for strategic litigation initiatives undertaken by HRDs/CSOs aimed at addressing issues of human rights promotion and protection, including the closing civic space in several countries. Such support should also include filing amicus curiae applications in strategic cases challenging repressive laws and practices, as the engagement of NHRIs and NANHRI in such undertaken, also brings to the fore their expertise on such issues alongside validating their effort at exercising/implementing their mandate of promoting and protecting fundamental rights and freedoms for all.
- l) Call on AfricanDefenders, DefendDefenders and NANHRI to enhance collaboration with NHRIs and scale up fundraising efforts for resources to support strategic programmatic initiatives of NHRIs and convene regular consultation and reflection meetings between NHRIs and HRDs to explore opportunities and strategies aimed at promoting fundamental rights and freedoms and the protection of human rights defenders.
- m) Call on AfricanDefenders, DefendDefenders and NANHRI to foster increased collaboration with existing mandate holders/mechanisms within the African Human Rights Systems for advancing the promotion and protection of human rights on the

continent and enhancing greater protection of HRDs with special consideration for the protection of women HRDs in accordance with the provisions of the African Charter and Marrakech Declaration.

Adopted in Accra, Ghana on 6 December 2022.