

27 February 2023

To: All UN Member States

HRC52: Support consensus renewal of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders

Human rights defenders are people who act with humanity, serve humanity and who contribute to and bring out the best in humanity. They are key to our daily lives - they work so our governments are more transparent and accountable, our environment cleaner and safer, our schools and workplaces fairer, and our futures more sustainable. As human rights defenders confront power, privilege and prejudice, they frequently face a wide range of risks and threats, including against their organisations and their families, friends and loved ones. Despite their vital contribution, both some governments and non-State actors are still seeking to silence defenders as they expose injustices and demand accountability for all.

The mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders is integral to their protection and recognition, globally. It gathers and responds to information on the situation of defenders around the world, engages constructively with governments and non-State actors and provides expert recommendations to promote the effective implementation of the '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](#)).

2023 marks 25 years since the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on human rights defenders. The adoption of the Declaration was a critical point in human rights history where it articulated how existing human rights law applies to the situation of human rights defenders, recognised the importance and legitimacy of human rights activity, and the need to protect it along with those who carry it out. It is apposite that this major anniversary coincides with the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, reflecting the integral role that human rights defenders play in the realisation of universal human rights.

In 2022, the Human Rights Council [reaffirmed](#) the importance of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and its full and effective implementation, and that promoting respect, support and protection for the activities of human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, is essential to the overall enjoyment of human rights, including in conflict and post-conflict situations. In 2021, the General Assembly passed by consensus with 85 State co-sponsors a resolution [acknowledging](#) the important and legitimate role that human rights defenders played in the COVID-19 response, as well as the challenges faced as a result.

At the 52nd session of the Council, States will consider a resolution extending the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for three years. This is a key opportunity for States and the Council to demonstrate their support and recognition for the indispensable role

human rights defenders play to ensure that all people enjoy freedom, dignity, justice and equality.

Our organisations therefore urge all States to support the resolution renewing the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders by:

- **participating positively in the negotiations on the resolution;**
- **presenting early co-sponsorship of the text;**
- **resisting any attempts to dilute the mandate or State obligations; and**
- **supporting consensus renewal of the mandate.**

Sincerely,