

DECLARATION OF THE EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

We, Human Rights Defenders from Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Somaliland, Sudan including Southern Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda meeting at the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Conference, organised by the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project and Amnesty International, held at the Windsor Lake Victoria Hotel, Entebbe, Uganda from 30 October to 4 November 2005;

Recalling that Human Rights Defenders are men and women working for the promotion and protection of regionally and internationally recognised human rights, including those working on civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights through peaceful means;

Taking into consideration the significant role that Human Rights Defenders, including Women Human Rights Defenders, play in the promotion and consolidation of peace, human rights, good governance, democracy and rule of law;

Deeply concerned about the great personal risks and dangers Human Rights Defenders face, including harassment, cruel and degrading punishments, torture, intimidation, death threats, imprisonment, abductions, arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings and detention in unauthorised detention centres;

Deeply concerned that Human Rights Defenders are, at times, subjected to public statements that dehumanize and demoralise them, including smear campaigns, political persecution, vilification and constant surveillance;

Deeply concerned about the social and cultural environment in which women operate as Human Rights Defenders and the specific risks that they face, including social stigmatisation, sexual harassment, gender discrimination, pressure exerted upon women human rights defenders by traditional practices, non-state actors, perpetrators of violence against women, and patriarchal society;

Mindful of the lack/insufficient of national mechanisms for the effective protection of Human Rights Defenders and the lack of recognition by Governments and Governmental Institutions in the East and Horn of Africa of the existence of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect universally recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, 9 December 1998(UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders);

Recognising the existence of International and Regional instruments for the protection of Human Rights Defenders, including the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Commission) Resolution on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and other regional and international instruments;

Emphasising the important role that the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on Human Rights Defenders and the African Commission Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa play in the effective protection of Human Rights Defenders in the East and Horn of Africa;

Recognising the importance of solidarity among Human Rights Defenders, networking and network building at national, sub-regional levels and with the international community as a vital source of protection for individual Human Rights Defenders;

CALL UPON:

All Governments and Governmental Institutions in the East and Horn of Africa to recognise the legitimacy and important role Human Rights Defenders play in the promotion and consolidation of peace, human rights, good governance, democracy and rule of law;

All Governments and Governmental Institutions in the East and Horn of Africa to ensure that national legislation and administrative regulations regarding non-governmental and civil society based organisations are in conformity with the principles enshrined in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and support the role of Human Rights Defenders;

All Governments and Governmental Institutions in the East and Horn of Africa to cooperate with the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on Human Rights Defenders and the African Commission Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa;

The African Union Members States and the African Union Commission to support the work of the UN and African Commission special mechanisms for the protection of Human Rights Defenders and to develop a climate of respect for the work of Human Rights Defenders;

The United Nations and the African Commission special mechanisms for the protection of Human Rights Defenders to pay particular attention to the situation of Human Rights Defenders in the East and Horn of Africa and to support their effort in the promotion and protection of human rights;

The East African Community, Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union and the international community to engage dialogue with relevant stakeholders with a view to protecting Human Rights Defenders;

The European Union to operationalize and give full effect to the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders of June 2004, in particular in providing adequate resources to Human Rights Defenders in the region and to enable them to carry out their human rights work;

The international community, African governments, inter-governmental organisations and UN specialised agencies, UN Field Presence and Country Teams

working in Africa for human rights, development, reconstruction of war-torn areas, women, children, refugees and internally displaced persons, for example, to include in their strategies and programmes, the promotion of human rights and support for Human Rights Defenders in the East and Horn of Africa;

The Human Rights Defenders in the East and Horn of Africa to support and participate actively in the success of the work of the Network;

AND RESOLVE TO:

Stand shoulder to shoulder and demonstrate unflinching support for Human Rights Defenders, in particular those working under threats in situations of armed conflict, those facing political and legal repression, and other forms of violations;

Support the regional and international special mechanisms for the protection of Human Rights Defenders;

Disseminate this Declaration and implement the Action Plan of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network.

**Adopted by acclamation on 4 November 2005,
Entebbe, Uganda**