

EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Press Statement

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Banjul: The Kampala Plan of Action is launched: a significant step to enhanced protection of HRDs in Africa

The Kampala Plan of Action (known as the KAPA) was officially adopted on the 16th May 2009 in Banjul, The Gambia. Its launch, which brings about the establishment of the Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network, marks a significant step on the road to enhanced collaboration between regional human rights networks and towards a better protection of human rights defenders (HRDs) throughout Africa.

KAPA is the product of significant discussions and debates that took place during the *Johannesburg +10 All African Human Rights Defenders Conference* which brought together over 80 defenders from throughout Africa from the 20th-23rd April 2009 in Kampala, Uganda.

These discussions highlighted time and again the desire of defenders to see more formalised channels of interaction established across the continent as a means of, amongst other aims, sharing good practices and experiences on the protection of HRDs and developing sustainable collaboration.

The KAPA was launched in Banjul at an event attended by, amongst others, Mme Alapini-Gansou, the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, Mrs. Soyata Maiga, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa, Mrs. Catherine Atoki, Chairperson of the Follow-Up Committee on the Robben Island Guidelines and Mr. Mumba Malila, Special Rapporteur on Prisons and Conditions of Detentions in Africa. The honorary president of the International Federation of Human Rights, Mr. Sidiki Kaba, Mrs. Inmaculada Barcia of the International Service for Human Rights, Kolawole Olaniyan of Amnesty International, Mrs. Hannah Foster of the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies were also present.

Mme Reini Alapini Gansou said in her intervention at the launch "*Human rights defenders continue to face significant challenges, some new many old, across Africa. And yet at the same time defenders continue to show enormous commitment to ensuring that the space necessary for them to pursue their vital work is maintained*"

Mme Alapini Gansou, who served as the Honorary Chairperson of the Steering Committee of Johannesburg +10, concluded her remarks by explaining that synergy and true cooperation among actors involved in the protection of HRDs will determine whether or not the efforts of defenders and notably this new initiative will bring about positive and significant change.

Mr Hassan Shire, Executive Director of East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP) whose organisation has agreed to host the Secretariat of the Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network, which will undertake the implementation of the KAPA, said "*EHAHRDP is honoured to host the secretariat of the Network in Kampala. Defenders at the*

conference showed their willingness to ensure that this is but the first step towards greater collaboration; on behalf of the Steering Committee members and the Secretariat, I will seek to ensure that the momentum and energy shown at the conference is honoured and used towards enhancing the protection of defenders throughout the continent.”

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