

Human Rights Council 28th session

INDEPENDENT EXPERT ON CÔTE D'IVOIRE, ITEM 10 – TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND CAPACITY BUILDING, 24 MARCH 2015

Mr President,

ISHR thanks the independent expert for his update, and we look forward to the full mission report. As noted by the expert, Côte d'Ivoire's human rights situation has improved on several fronts. An important achievement has been the adoption of a law to protect human rights defenders, the first of its kind in Africa.

The Law should also be periodically reviewed and strengthened in consultation with human rights defenders to close protection gaps and ensure it is effective and proactive in promoting an enabling environment for human rights defenders and addressing systemic factors contributing to attacks against them.

We urge the Independent Expert to encourage the government to adopt the executive decree needed to implement this law. Without such a decree this initiative will remain but a hollow promise of protection for Ivorian defenders. As the elections approach, defenders will play a critical role monitoring the human rights situation, but in doing so are likely to become more vulnerable to attacks and harassment. The adoption of the decree would give defenders a much needed institutionalised framework for protection and set an example for countries throughout the continent and beyond.

We also urge the Independent Expert to continue to work on the fight against impunity. Since the electoral crisis in 2010-11, human rights activists have advocated for justice for all victims of the conflict. The slow progress in bringing perpetrators on all sides to justice undermines victims' rights and the reconciliation process.

Lastly, we regret that the National Human Rights Commission does not enjoy the institutional independence required by the Paris Principles, as indicated by the accepted recommendations in the UPR. We encourage the Government to seek the advice of the Independent Expert, together with OHCHR and the International Coordinating Committee of NHRIs, on the legislative and other measures required to ensure the required independence. An independent, effective and adequately resourced NHRC – with a dedicated and full resourced human rights defenders focal point – is critical to promote human rights and protect human rights defenders in Côte d'Ivoire.

I thank you.