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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Margaret Sekagya

Summary

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Margaret Sekagya, presents her fourth report to the Human Rights Council, submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 7/8 and 16/5.

In chapter II of the report, the Special Rapporteur provides an account of her activities during the reporting year. She draws the attention of Member States to the 234 communications sent under the mandate during the past year. More detailed information on the communications is contained in addendum 2 (A/HRC/19/55/Add.2) to the present report.

In chapter III, the Special Rapporteur focuses on the specific risks and challenges faced by selected groups of defenders, including journalists and media workers, defenders working on land and environmental issues and youth and student defenders. Regional overviews are also provided for each group.

In chapter III, the Special Rapporteur also outlines her conclusions and recommendations regarding each of the selected groups of defenders.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is the fourth submitted to the Human Rights Council by the Special Rapporteur, and the twelfth thematic report submitted by the mandate holder on human rights defenders since 2000. The report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 7/8 and 16/5.

2. In March 2011, the Human Rights Council decided to renew the mandate on the situation of human rights defenders for another three years extending thus the term of the Special Rapporteur until 2014. The Special Rapporteur is honoured to be able to continue her work and is fully committed to persevere in her efforts to make the work of human rights defenders visible and to contribute to their security and protection.

3. The mandate holder has consistently addressed the specificities of the situation of certain groups of defenders most at risk and the particular challenges they face with a view to shedding light on their work, calling attention to their situation and, hence, contributing to their protection. The present report continues with this approach by paying attention to the situation and particular challenges faced by journalists and media workers; defenders working on land and environmental issues; and youth and student defenders when they act in defence of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

4. First, the report briefly outlines the approach of the mandate holder and the methodology used, which is mostly based on communications sent between 2007 and 2011. The report then focuses on each of the selected groups, providing a brief overview of the relevant legal frameworks and work of mandate and offering an analysis of the specific risks that these defenders face. The analysis aims to identify the nature of the activities of the reported victims, the alleged violations and the perpetrators involved and the regional trends that may emerge. In the last section, the report provides a series of observations and recommendations regarding each of the selected groups of defenders.

II. Activities during the reporting period

A. Communications transmitted to States

5. Between 9 December 2010 and 8 December 2011, the Special Rapporteur sent 234 communications. Communications were sent to 71 States, and, at the time of writing, 91 responses had been received, which indicates only a 39 per cent response rate. Communications sent during the period, and the corresponding responses by Governments, will be included in addendum 2 to the present report (A/HRC/19/55/Add.2).

B. Country visits

6. During the reporting period, the Special Rapporteur visited India from 10 to 21 January 2011. A separate report on this visit has been submitted to the nineteenth session of the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/19/55/Add.1).

Pending requests

7. As of December 2011, the Special Rapporteur has the following outstanding visit requests: Belarus (2002, 2003, 2004, 2010, 2011), Bhutan (2001, 2002), Burundi (2010), Chad (2002, 2003, 2004), China (2008, 2010), Egypt (2003, 2008, 2010), Equatorial Guinea (2002), Fiji (2010), Ireland (2008, 2011), Kazakhstan (2011), Kenya (2003, 2004),

Malaysia (2002, 2010), Maldives (2006), Mexico (2011), Mozambique (2003, 2004), Namibia (2011), Nepal (2003, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2009), Pakistan (2003, 2007, 2008, 2010), Philippines (2008, 2010), Russian Federation (2004, 2011), Singapore (2002, 2004), Sri Lanka (2008, 2010), Syrian Arab Republic (2008, 2010), Thailand (2010), Tunisia (2002, 2004, 2008, 2010, 2011), Turkmenistan (2003, 2004), Uzbekistan (2001, 2004, 2007), Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (2007, 2008, 2010) and Zimbabwe (2002, 2004, 2008, 2010, 2011). The Special Rapporteur regrets that some of these requests are long-standing, and hopes that States will give due attention to all her requests in a timely manner.

8. The Special Rapporteur was invited by the Government of Honduras and had agreed to undertake a fact-finding visit from 27 September to 4 October 2011. Regrettably, the visit had to be postponed due to reasons beyond the control of the Special Rapporteur but she hopes to be able to carry out the visit in early 2012.

C. Cooperation with the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations

9. The Special Rapporteur has continued to place particular emphasis on cooperation with all bodies of the United Nations and other regional intergovernmental human rights organizations.

10. In its resolution 16/35, the Human Rights Council took note of the third joint report on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (A/HRC/16/68) by the Special Rapporteur and six other thematic special procedures mandate holders. The Human Rights Council invited the Office of the High Commissioner, through its presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to enhance its technical assistance programmes and activities, and to report to the Human Rights Council at its nineteenth session.

11. From 27 June to 1 July 2011, the Special Rapporteur attended the seventeenth annual meeting of the special procedures mandate holders in Geneva.

12. In July 2011, the Special Rapporteur issued an online commentary to 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 (hereinafter "Declaration on Human Rights Defenders") analysing the rights enshrined in the text, the most common restrictions and violations as well as what is needed to ensure their realisation. The commentary is available in the section on the work of the Special Rapporteur of the website of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.¹

13. On 24 October 2011, the Special Rapporteur presented her fourth report to the General Assembly (A/66/203). The report focused on rights provided for in the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and analysed what the different rights entail, as well as the various aspects necessary to ensure their implementation. The report also addressed the most common restrictions and violations faced by human rights defenders. The report provided recommendations to facilitate the implementation of each right by States.

14. From 27 to 28 October 2011, a member of the team supporting the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders participated in a round table on human rights defenders in the Council of Europe area, where challenges to the work of defenders, and access to human rights protection mechanisms and the participation of

¹ www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/defenders/index.htm.

defenders in decision-making processes, were discussed. The event took place in Strasbourg and was organized by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights.

D. Invitations by Governments

15. From 14 to 15 February 2011, the Special Rapporteur held consultations with stakeholders in the context of the renewal of the mandate during the sixteenth session of the Human Rights Council. During these consultations, she met with Member States and civil society. The consultations were held in Geneva and were organized and sponsored by the Government of Norway.

E. Cooperation with non-governmental organizations

16. The Special Rapporteur continued the fruitful cooperation of the mandate holder with civil society at national, regional and international levels. The Special Rapporteur regrets that, due to time constraints, she was unable to participate in all the conferences and seminars to which she was invited. On occasions where the Special Rapporteur could not be present herself, she endeavoured, to the extent possible, to have an Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) staff member participate.

17. From 23 to 24 February 2011, the Special Rapporteur participated in the East Africa Human Rights Defenders Conference, which brought together human rights defenders from Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania to discuss challenges and possible strategies for action. The event was organized by the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights and took place in Nairobi.

18. On 28 April 2011, a staff member of OHCHR attended a round table on the criminalization of human rights defenders and social protest and the role of transnational companies in Latin America. The event took place in Brussels and was organized by the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme by the World Organization against Torture and the International Federation for Human Rights.

19. From 14 to 16 September 2011, a staff member of OHCHR attended the Sixth Dublin Platform for Human Rights Defenders organized by Front Line, the International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders.

20. On 5 December 2011, the Special Rapporteur participated in a forum with human rights defenders that took place in Kampala and was organized by the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project.

III. Selected groups of defenders at risk: journalists and media workers; defenders working on land and environmental issues; and youth and student defenders

A. The approach of the mandate holder

21. The mandate holder since the inception of the mandate has highlighted the need to pay special attention to selected groups of human rights defenders who seem to face extraordinary risks due to the work that they do and the contexts in which they operate. This has been done through thematic reports, reports on fact-finding visits to countries and through communications sent to Governments. Both mandate holders have seen this

approach as a necessary recognition and an attempt to contribute to the protection of those defenders most exposed to attacks and violations.

22. In 2007, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights defenders dedicated a full report to defenders working on economic, social and cultural rights (A/HRC/4/37), including those working on land and environmental issues, where she highlighted that not only are the rights upheld by this group an inalienable part of the international human rights framework, but also that their activities are fully protected by the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

23. In 2008, the Special Rapporteur presented her first report to the General Assembly (A/63/288), in which she laid down her vision for the mandate. In that report, she indicated that she would maintain and strengthen the focus of the mandate on those groups of defenders most exposed to risks. At that stage, she also identified several groups of defenders particularly targeted for their activities, including women human rights defenders; those working to promote economic, social and cultural rights, including land and environmental issues; and those defenders working for the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities.

24. In 2011, the Special Rapporteur presented her third report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/16/44) where she focused on the situation, risks and challenges faced by women human rights defenders and those working on women's rights and gender issues.

B. Risks and challenges faced by the selected groups of defenders at risk

25. This section focuses primarily on an analysis of the communications sent by the mandate holder during the period December 2006–May 2011² concerning the selected groups of defenders and their family members, that is, journalists and media workers; defenders working on land and environmental issues; and youth and student defenders. The analysis aims at identifying the nature of the activities carried out by the alleged victims, as well as the reported violations and perpetrators, with a view to identifying possible trends, including patterns of impunity that may emerge.

26. The data used and trends identified in this report are based mostly on the allegations received and acted upon by the mandate holder. It therefore does not aim to capture the full picture of the situation of these defenders worldwide. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that some of the communications have been responded to by Governments. While the Special Rapporteur wishes to thank those Governments who replied to the communications sent, she remains concerned regarding the gravity of many of the allegations received, including in cases wherein the facts may have been disputed. Where it is deemed necessary, numbers of communications and regions and States to which they were sent have been mentioned.

27. Between December 2006 and the first five months of 2011, the mandate holder sent nearly 1,500 communications to Governments, an average of 330 cases per year, including allegation letters and urgent appeals. Of these communications, about 25 per cent concerned journalists and media workers defending human rights; defenders working on land and environmental issues; and youth and student defenders.

28. The communications sent during the mentioned period concerning these groups of defenders are analysed in detail below. Figures provided in the different sections are the

² See the communications report of special procedures, A/HRC/18/51 and Corr.1; and summaries of cases transmitted to Governments and replies received by the Special Rapporteur contained in documents A/HRC/16/44/Add.1, A/HRC/13/22/Add.1 and Corr.1, A/HRC/10/12/Add.1 and A/HRC/7/28/Add.1.

result of a multilayered analysis which has unfolded different elements of the communications sent, including the activities of the alleged victims, the reported violations suffered, the alleged perpetrators thereof and certain regional patterns.

1. Journalists and media workers

(a) International human rights framework and approach of the mandate holder

29. The right to freedom of expression and the right to seek, receive and impart information are contained in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This right is also enshrined in article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as in several regional conventions and charters.

30. Regarding the limitations on freedom of expression, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression has reiterated that the justification of protection of other rights must not be used to protect the State and its officials from public opinion or criticism and that no criminal or civil action for defamation should be admissible in respect of a civil servant or the performance of his or her duties (A/HRC/14/23, para. 82).

31. The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders also seeks to protect the monitoring and advocacy functions of journalists and media workers defenders by recognizing in its article 6 their right to obtain and disseminate information relevant to the enjoyment of human rights.

32. The mandate holder has stated on various occasions that, although many professional activities do not involve human rights work all of the time, they can have occasional links to the defence of human rights. In this regard, journalists and media workers can be considered as human rights defenders when, through their activities, they promote human rights in general and strive to protect the rights of others. The mandate holder has also frequently underlined the important role of journalists and media workers in the promotion and protection of human rights. On the one hand, their work can help protect people when their lives or rights are threatened or whose work is being unduly hindered. On the other hand, journalists and media workers have the means to effectively raise awareness about the work of defenders and the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

33. Today, journalists and media workers can employ a wide array of means of communication, including printed media, radio, television, Internet, social media and other communication technologies in order to report on human rights issues. Moreover, technologies that were once exclusively used by a limited number of professionals are now widely available. People all over the world without formal media qualifications are, in certain instances, playing a key role in the gathering and dissemination of essential information for the defence of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

34. Because of the potential impact on society that journalists and media workers can have by disseminating information about human rights through a wide array of media, those individuals are often threatened, wounded and killed in an attempt to silence their voices. In this regard, the Special Rapporteur is alarmed at the increase in the number of communications sent by the mandate holder between 2007 and 2011 concerning attacks, attempted killings and killings of journalists and media workers while performing their duties.

(b) Activities, risks and challenges faced by journalists and media workers

35. Between 2007 and May 2011, the Special Rapporteur sent 206 communications, including urgent appeals and allegation letters, on journalists and media workers who act as human rights defenders. These communications were sent to 67 States, and, at the time of

writing, 90 responses had been received, of which 80 could be considered substantive responses, which indicates a response rate of less than 40 per cent. Of the 206 communications sent, 56 communications were sent to the Middle East and North Africa region (27 per cent), 43 communications were sent to the Asia Pacific region (20.8 per cent), 39 communications were sent to the African region (18.9 per cent), 36 communications were sent to the Americas (17.4 per cent) and 32 communications were sent to Europe and Central Asia (15.5 per cent).

36. Based on the allegations received during the reporting period, the mandate holder sent communications on violations against journalists and media workers who tried to exercise their right to freedom of opinion and expression, for instance, through the publication of letters on the national health system; the use of photojournalism as a means to express their opinions; or their participation in protests and conferences.

37. Journalists and media workers have been targeted because of their reports on human rights violations or because they were witnesses to human rights violations themselves. The mandate holder has received information on investigative journalists and media workers targeted for their research on topics such as crime, corruption, trafficking, torture, impunity, environmental issues and forced evictions. Often, journalists and media workers have been arrested and detained for monitoring demonstrations. Other journalists and media workers were targeted for participating in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), their democratic activism or working and advocating for the rights of certain groups of people, such as minorities.

38. According to the information received by the mandate holder, there are certain contexts in which journalists and media workers seem to be more exposed to violations, such as armed conflicts (Colombia, Somalia); situations of unrest in connection with a coup d'état (Honduras); and during and in the aftermath of elections (Belarus, Ethiopia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Tunisia). Other journalists and media workers who suffered violations and abuses were trying to promote and defend human rights in the context of peacebuilding in post-conflict societies (Democratic Republic of Congo and Iraq).

39. Journalists and media workers have also been attacked when their activities include investigations of abuses by powerful non-State actors, such as organized crime (Italy, Mexico) and oil interest groups (Nigeria). Others have also been targeted as a consequence of monitoring preparations for landmark events, such as the Olympic Games (China).

40. According to the information received by the mandate holder during the reporting period, journalists and media workers active on human rights issues were subject to killings, attacks, disappearance, abduction, torture and ill-treatment. Of the 206 communications sent, 24 cases referred to killings (Americas 10, Europe and Central Asia 5, Middle East and North Africa 3, Africa 3, Asia 4) and 33 to physical attacks, including attempted killings, excessive use of force during demonstrations and physical abuse (Asia Pacific 10, Americas 6, Europe and Central Asia 6, Middle East and North Africa 6, Africa 5). A number of communications dealt with journalists and media workers who were abducted or disappeared.

41. During the period, the mandate holder sent 21 communications with allegations of torture and ill-treatment of journalists and media workers acting as human rights defenders (Middle East and North Africa 9, Asia Pacific 6, Africa 5, the Americas 1). In some instances, torture not only implied physical abuse, but also included denial of medical treatment by the authorities.

42. Other journalists and media workers were subjected to arrest, detention and interrogation. During the period, 68 communications reported the use of arrest, often arbitrarily, as a tool to silence their voices (Middle East and North Africa 29, Africa 19, Asia Pacific 12, Europe and Central Asia 7, the Americas 1). Of these communications, 16

were sent to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Moreover, during the reporting period, the mandate holder sent various communications with allegations that police, secret service officials and members of the security forces repeatedly summoned journalist and media workers to their offices to interrogate them (Africa 5, Asia Pacific 3, Europe and Central Asia 1, Middle East and North Africa 1).

43. Furthermore, the mandate holder has also observed common restrictions on the right to freedom of opinion and expression of journalists and media workers active on human rights issues, including (a) the use of civil and criminal defamation and libel proceedings against defenders speaking out against human rights violations; (b) the adoption of laws restricting printing and publication; and (c) the censorship, suspension, closing or banning of media outlets (A/66/203, para. 49).

44. During the reporting period, the mandate holder sent 42 communications regarding cases where journalists and media workers were subject to criminalization and the abusive use of legal frameworks (Asia Pacific 14, Middle East and North Africa 11, Africa 9, Americas 5, Europe and Central Asia 5). Since the inception of the mandate, information received indicates that often arrests and detentions of human rights defenders, including journalists and media workers, have been part of this strategy (see A/58/380).

45. In connection with the above, the mandate holder sent various communications (Middle East and North Africa 4, Europe and Central Asia 3, Africa 3, Asia Pacific 1) regarding the lack of due process and judicial guarantees, including no access to lawyers or detention without charges. Moreover, 18 communications sent during the period contained allegations that journalist and media workers were sentenced, at times heavily, due to their human rights activities (Middle East and North Africa 9, Asia Pacific 4, Africa 3, Europe and Central Asia 2).

46. These defenders were also subjected to threats, including death threats. During the period, 23 communications referred to threats in the form of letters, e-mails, phone calls and warnings by authorities (the Americas 8, Asia Pacific 7, Europe and Central Asia 4, Middle East and North Africa 2, Africa 2). More specifically, 17 communications referred to death threats (Asia Pacific 7, Americas 3, Africa 3, Europe and Central Asia 3, Middle East and North Africa 1).

47. During the period, 21 communications contained allegations of personal properties and financial assets being confiscated (Europe and Central Asia 6, Middle East and North Africa 6, Africa 4, Asia Pacific 4, Americas 2).

48. Journalists and media workers have also suffered searches of and raids on their properties, confiscation of equipment, and freezing of financial assets. The mandate holder sent 18 communications with allegations concerning searches of the houses and offices of journalists and media workers by State actors, including the confiscation of their audio-visual equipment such as cameras (Middle East and North Africa 6, Asia Pacific 5, Europe and Central Asia 4, Americas 1, Africa 2).

49. Moreover, journalists and media workers were subjected to various forms of intimidation and harassment. For instance, they faced obstacles to carrying out their work, such as the closure of their offices and newspapers; censorship on media coverage and disruption of internet connections; prohibition to freely cover protests and demonstrations; and restriction to their freedom of movement including deportation. In this respect, the mandate holder sent 11 communications on intimidation and harassment of journalists and media workers (Americas 4, Middle East and North Africa 3, Asia Pacific 2, Europe and Central Asia 1, Africa 1). In some instances, as a means of intimidating journalists and media workers, their families were also targeted (Africa 2, the Americas 1, Middle East and North Africa 1, Asia Pacific 1).

50. Women journalists and media professionals working on human rights issues also appear to be exposed to risks as a result of their work. This group includes women investigative journalists working on human rights-related issues, women columnists advocating human rights reform, women reporters monitoring and reporting on violations of human rights and women bloggers (see A/HRC/16/44). Of the 206 communications sent during the reporting period, women journalists and media professionals were the subject of 41 communications or about 20 per cent of the cases (the Americas 11, Asia Pacific 9, Middle East and North Africa 9, Africa 6, Europe and Central Asia 6). These women were mostly summoned by the police and arrested in connection with their activities and criminally charged, often for defamation. They also received threats, including death threats, their offices were raided and their freedom of movement was unduly restricted.

(c) *Main perpetrators: State actors*

51. Of the 206 communications sent during the reporting period, in 138 communications (67 per cent) the alleged perpetrator was connected to the State, including local, regional or national Government officials, police authorities, members of the army, immigration officials and members of national intelligence. By region, allegations received indicate that perpetrators tend more often to be State actors in the Middle East and North Africa region (53 out of 56 cases – 94.6 per cent), most notably in the Islamic Republic of Iran (22), followed by Africa (32 out of 39 – 82 per cent), Asia Pacific (25 out of 43 – 58.1 per cent), Europe and Central Asia (17 out of 32 – 53.1 per cent) and the Americas (11 out of 36 – 30.5 per cent).

52. According to the information received by the mandate holder during the period, those journalists and media workers who continue to suffer more at the hands of State actors are the ones exposing human rights violations by the State, who have advocated for the transparency of public institutions or demanded the accountability of public officials. Certain States continue to claim that reports of alleged human rights abuses by members of Government or statements critical of the human rights impact of Government security policies constitute information whose publication could be a threat to national security. In this regard, laws restricting printing and publication are still used to curtail the freedom of the press. Any opinion perceived to differ from State ideology continues to be branded as a security concern and used as a justification to unduly restrict the right to freedom of opinion and expression (see, for example, A/58/380).

53. Attacks on journalists and media workers are becoming ever more serious in nature, and non-State actors seem to be more and more active in this respect. Terrorist organizations, gangs, drug-traffickers, and extremist religious and political groups have added themselves to the list of those committing abuses and violations against journalists and media workers who act as human rights defenders. In this connection, of the 206 communications sent during the reporting period, 17 communications referred to violations committed by non-State actors, of which a large part were sent to countries in the Americas (13) but also in the Asia Pacific region (2) and Europe and Central Asia (2).

54. During this period, the mandate holder also sent 41 communications with allegations of violations perpetrated by unknown groups or individuals, mostly in the Americas (12), followed by countries in the Asia Pacific region (11), Africa (7), Europe and Central Asia (9) and the Middle East and North Africa (2).

(d) *Overview by region*

55. In the African region, the type of activities carried out by journalists and media workers allegedly targeted were monitoring demonstrations; exercising their right to freedom of opinion and expression; or working on impunity, corruption, women's rights, human rights violations committed by the State, environmental issues and democracy. In

this region, the Democratic Republic of Congo received the highest number of communications (10).

56. In the Americas region, journalists and media workers were mainly targeted due to their work on environmental issues, human rights violations committed by the State, corruption, monitoring demonstrations, exercising their right to freedom of expression, investigating on drug dealing and mafia groups and denouncing impunity. In this region, Mexico received the highest number of communications (10), followed by Honduras (8) and Colombia (6).

57. In the Asia Pacific region, such defenders were mainly targeted for exercising their right to freedom of opinion and expression (including through the Internet), promoting democracy, as well as for denouncing corruption and violations committed by the State, witnessing human rights violations, advocating women's rights and reporting human rights violations. The mandate holder sent the highest number of communications to the Islamic Republic of Iran (22), China (8) and Sri Lanka (7).

58. In the Europe and Central Asia region, journalists and media workers who were targeted focused their work mainly on monitoring demonstrations, democratic governance, investigative journalism, corruption, human rights violations committed by the State, environmental issues and minority rights. They were also targeted for exercising their right to freedom of opinion and expression, including through the Internet. The mandate holder sent the highest number of communications to the Russian Federation (9), followed by Uzbekistan (7).

59. Concerning the Middle East and North Africa region, journalists and media workers were targeted mainly because of their activities monitoring demonstrations, denouncing human rights violations committed by the State, working on women's rights, minority rights, corruption and advocating for democracy. They were also targeted for exercising their right to freedom of opinion and expression, including through the Internet. In this region, the mandate holder sent the highest number of communications to the Syrian Arab Republic (6) and Yemen (6).

2. Defenders working on land and environmental issues

(a) International human rights framework and approach of the mandate holder

60. The two International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights share a common article 1 which provides, inter alia, that "all peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. All peoples may, for their own ends, freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources without prejudice to any obligations arising out of international economic co-operation, based upon the principle of mutual benefit, and international law. In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence".

61. The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, in its preamble, recognizes the legitimacy of activities for the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights when it acknowledges the "valuable work of individuals, groups and associations" in the elimination of violations including those resulting from "the refusal to recognize the right of peoples to self-determination and the right of every people to exercise full sovereignty over its wealth and natural resources".

62. As the Special Representative had highlighted, the protection accorded to defenders by the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders is not dependant on whether the focus of the work of the defender(s) in question is on civil and political rights or economic, social and cultural rights. All peaceful actions by defenders to call attention to possible failures of

the State to create the necessary social and economic conditions for the enjoyment of rights and freedoms in practice are legitimate and fall within the scope of the Declaration (A/HRC/4/37, paras. 27–30).

63. The Special Rapporteur is aware of the particular risks that these defenders face, often at the hands of non-State actors or unknown individuals acting in collusion with them. She has received, and continues to receive, allegations indicating that security guards employed by oil and mining companies allegedly use death threats, acts of intimidation and attacks against defenders who denounce the perceived negative impact of the companies' activities on the enjoyment of human rights by local communities (A/65/223, paras. 9–12).

(b) *Activities, risks and challenges faced by defenders working on land and environmental issues*

64. Between December 2006 and May 2011, a large number of communications sent during the reporting period (106) concerned alleged violations against defenders and activists working on land and environmental issues. According to the information received, this group is thoroughly heterogeneous. It includes defenders carrying out a vast range of activities related to land and environmental rights, including those working on issues related to extractive industries, and construction and development projects; those working for the rights of indigenous and minority communities; women human rights defenders; and journalists.

65. Therefore, this section of the report has been structured on the basis of the different subgroups identified, with each subsection including information on profile of activities, alleged violations, perpetrators and regional trends. It is also worth mentioning that there is certain overlap between the different subgroups, particularly between the group of those defenders working on issues related to extractive industries and construction and development projects and those working for the rights of indigenous and minority communities.

Defending land and environmental issues in connection with extractive industries and construction and development projects

66. During the period, the mandate holder sent 34 communications regarding defenders working on land and environmental issues in connection with the activities of extractive industries as well as construction and development projects. The main context in which these violations occurred was ongoing land disputes with both State and non-State actors, including multinational corporations and private security companies.

67. The violations reported were the result of activities connected to different extractive industries, construction and development projects, including hydroelectric power stations and cement factories (Guatemala, Brazil); dams (Brazil, India); dumps (Mexico); gas pipelines (Brazil); gated communities and marinas (Bahamas); residential and leisure complexes (Mexico); the operation of mines (China, Mexico, Ecuador, Papua New Guinea, Peru); nuclear power plants (Philippines) and the production of oil and petrol (China, Nigeria, Peru), as well as logging (Brazil, Cambodia, Honduras, Mexico).

68. According to the information received, defenders working on such issues seem to face a high risk of violations to their physical integrity, including attempted killings (Brazil, Ecuador), killings (Brazil, Cambodia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Philippines), attacks (Brazil, Mexico, Papua New Guinea), assault and ill-treatment (Philippines), and excessive use of force by the police during demonstrations (India). They have also been subjected to threats and death threats (Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines) and different forms of intimidation (Peru, Bahamas, Brazil, Guatemala, Papua New Guinea) and harassment (China, Mexico, Peru).

69. In some instances, these defenders have suffered raids on their homes (China, Nigeria) and have had their houses destroyed by fire (Guatemala). In the Americas region, they have often been stigmatized by campaigns against them (Guatemala) and statements made by public officials (Peru). They have also faced criminalization on charges of extortion and blackmailing (China), espionage (Angola), defamation (Cambodia), terrorism (Peru) and intent to sell drugs (Bahamas). Others have been subjected to arrest and arbitrary detention (Ecuador, India, Mexico, Nigeria).

70. Violations against these defenders are carried out at the hands of State and non-State actors. State actors have included police, local authorities and public officials who have spoken out publicly against the work of defenders (Peru). Non-State actors have included transnational companies (Cambodia), media (Guatemala), paramilitary groups (Brazil, Colombia, Mexico) and private security guards (Brazil, Ecuador).

71. Defenders working on land and environmental issues in connection with extractive industries and construction and development projects in the Americas were the subject of most of the communications (21) within the group during the reporting period. They also faced the highest risk of death as a result of their human rights activities. Seven of the 21 communications sent were related to killings, six of which were sent to the Americas. This particular group of defenders in this region also faced a wide range of other violations such as death threats, attacks, attempted killings, intimidation, harassment, as well as stigmatization and discrediting campaigns.

72. Defenders working on these issues in the Asia Pacific region were the subject of nine of the total of 34 communications sent during the period, two of which concerned killings (Philippines, Cambodia). They also faced criminalization, threats, arrest and intimidation. In the African region, three communications were sent in total, two to Nigeria and one to Angola.

Defenders working for the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities

73. The mandate holder has also received and acted upon allegations of violations against defenders working on land and environmental issues as they relate to indigenous peoples and minority communities (29 communications). The activities in which they are engaged include participating in negotiations with local authorities in order to resolve land disputes (Brazil, Colombia and Guatemala) and investigating cases of land-grabbing (Bangladesh); defending the rights of indigenous communities (the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Cambodia, Guatemala, India, New Zealand, Peru) and representing indigenous communities at local and national levels (Bangladesh, Chile, Guatemala, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru and Tanzania); campaigning against forced evictions (Mexico, Colombia); participating in protests (Chile, India, Nepal); raising awareness abroad regarding violations of human rights (Papua New Guinea); campaigning for the protection of borders of their natural reserve (Brazil); and the submission of information to the United Nations human rights mechanisms (Guatemala).

74. A number of communications in relation to human rights defenders in this group concerned women defenders in Colombia, Guatemala, India, Mexico, Nepal and Peru.

75. Violations reported included threats to physical integrity in the form of killings (the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Malaysia and Mexico); attempted killings (one women defender in Mexico); physical attacks (36 women defenders in Nepal, an entire community in Brazil, five youths in Honduras, Chile, Nigeria and Papua New Guinea); and ill-treatment in detention (Bangladesh).

76. Violations against psychological integrity were also reported in the form of death threats (one women defender in Mexico and three defenders, including two women, in Peru); threats (Bangladesh, Brazil, Peru, three defenders in Nigeria, Papua New Guinea and

a community in the United Republic of Tanzania), and harassment and intimidation (women defenders in Mexico, Bangladesh, Brazil and Peru).

77. Defenders working on these issues have also been subjected to arrest (India) and detention (Chile, New Zealand, Brazil, Nepal, Bangladesh and Tanzania). They have faced criminalization in the form of accusations of possession of illegal weapons, land-grabbing (Bangladesh) and terrorism-related offences (17 defenders in New Zealand). NGOs in Guatemala faced stigmatization and a public campaign to discredit them following the presentation of a report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

78. These defenders have also reported to have been subjected to forced evictions (Colombia) and raids on their homes (Cambodia, New Zealand and Nigeria).

79. The perpetrators of the violations against this particular group of defenders reportedly included State and non-State actors and unidentified groups and individuals. Of the communications concerning killings (10), four were allegedly committed by State actors, one by non-State actors, and five by unknown groups or individuals.

80. In terms of regional trends, of the 29 communications sent concerning this group of defenders, 18 were sent to the Americas region (Chile 3, Guatemala 3, Peru 3, Mexico 2, Colombia 2, Brazil 3, Honduras 1, Plurinational State of Bolivia 1) and, of these, 10 dealt with killings, while others concerned death threats and threats (Brazil, Chile, Peru) and criminalization (Chile) and defamation (Guatemala). Nine communications were sent to the Asia Pacific region, including to Bangladesh (2) Malaysia (1), India (2), Nepal (1) and Cambodia (1). One of the communications expressed concern regarding an alleged killing (Malaysia) and four dealt with detention of defenders (India 2, Bangladesh and Nepal). Two communications were sent to the African region namely to Nigeria and the United Republic of Tanzania.

Women defenders working on land and environmental issues

81. Women human rights defenders working on land and environmental rights issues have been the subject of a number of communications (25) sent during the reporting period to countries in the Americas (17), Asia Pacific (6) and Africa (2).

82. These women defenders were active in negotiations with local authorities to resolve land conflicts (900 women in Brazil, Colombia Guatemala, India) and denouncing land-grabbing (China); working for reparations for indigenous people (India, Nepal and Peru) and denouncing encroachments on their lands (India, Nepal); organizing community events (Colombia); campaigning against nuclear power plants (Philippines 2); campaigning against the development of a gated community and marina development (Bahamas); working for the rights of field workers (Honduras); protesting against the creation of a residential and leisure complex (Mexico); filming a documentary on the harmful impact of oil production (Nigeria); campaigning for water rights and against the construction of a dam (India); and campaigning against mining projects (Peru).

83. In doing this kind of work, women human rights defenders have been subjected to threats against their physical integrity including: killings, mostly in the Americas region (Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras); excessive use of force against them during protests (Brazil, India and Nepal); and attacks by armed assailants (Guatemala). They have also been subjected to threats and death threats (Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Philippines, Peru); and harassment and intimidation (Bahamas, Mexico, Peru), including against their families (Colombia).

84. These women defenders have also suffered stigmatization (Peru) and criminalization on accusations of espionage (Angola) and have been sentenced to prison on charges of extortion and blackmailing following a trial allegedly without legal representation (China).

Some of them have been arrested and arbitrarily detained (India, Nepal and Nigeria). The alleged perpetrators of the aforementioned violations mostly included State actors (20) but also non-State actors (3) and unknown or unidentified actors (13).

85. As mentioned, the Americas region received most of the communications (17) sent by the mandate holder during the period concerning women defenders working on land and environmental issues, most of them related to killings and attempted killings. Other communications to this region dealt with threats and death threats (5) and harassment and intimidation (9). Alleged perpetrators in this region were mostly unidentified groups or individuals (12) followed by State and non-State actors.

86. All of the communications sent to countries in the Asia Pacific region related to women defenders working on these issues indicated State actors as the alleged perpetrators of the violations (6). Of these communications, one dealt with death threats (Philippines) and five dealt with arrest and detention (India 3, China, Nepal).

87. Two communications concerning women defenders working on land and environmental issues were sent to the African region namely to Angola and Nigeria.

Journalists working on land and environmental issues

88. According to the information received by the mandate holder during the reporting period, a specific group of defenders that also appears to be at particular risk is journalists working on land and environmental issues.

89. The communications sent during the reporting period related to this group (9) indicate that the activities in which they were engaged included: presenting and producing a televised news programme, which dealt with land issues and raised concerns regarding links between national police and private security groups (Honduras); the covering of forced evictions (Uganda); writing on environmental issues (China, El Salvador, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation); reporting on the work of mining companies (Mexico); making video-documentaries on demonstrations related to land and environmental issues (Nigeria); and covering the exhumation of bodies (Guatemala).

90. These journalists have been killed (Honduras, Mexico); suffered physical attacks (Russian Federation, Uganda) and death threats (Honduras, El Salvador); and been subject to different forms of intimidation (Guatemala). They have also been exposed to their cameras being confiscated by police (Uganda) and subjected to raids and searches of their homes and offices, during which images and production equipment were stolen (Guatemala). Journalists working on land and environmental issues have also faced charges of espionage (Islamic Republic of Iran), been arrested (China) and been arbitrarily detained without access to lawyers (Nigeria).

91. State actors were the alleged perpetrators in a number of communications (Uganda, China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nigeria), but unknown perpetrators (Honduras, Guatemala, Russian Federation) and non-State actors (El Salvador, Mexico) were also cited in some communications.

92. Four of the nine communications sent regarding this group of defenders were addressed to countries in the Americas region, of which two concerned the killings of journalists (Honduras, Mexico). The communications sent to the African region (Uganda and Nigeria) during the period dealt with violations allegedly committed by State actors. One communication was sent to the region of Europe and Central Asia (Russian Federation) and one to the Asia Pacific region (China).

3. Youth and student defenders

(a) *International human rights framework and the approach of the mandate holder*

93. Article 2 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, article 2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provide for the universality of human rights and the equality of all human beings. Everyone is entitled to the rights provided for in these human rights instruments without discrimination.

94. While age is not mentioned as a specific ground for discrimination in the international bill of human rights, the Human Rights Committee, in its general comment No. 18 (1989) on non-discrimination, specified that discrimination “should be understood to imply any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference ... which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, exercise or enjoyment by all persons, on an equal footing, of all rights and freedoms” (para. 7). The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights also recognizes that young people below 18 years of age should not be sentenced to death under any circumstance.

95. The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides every person below 18 years of age with specific rights along the same principles as other international human rights conventions, while recognizing children’s specific needs. The Convention on the Rights of the Child contains four guiding principles: non-discrimination; best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and the views of the child, which should be taken into consideration based on the age and maturity of the child in all matters affecting him or her.

96. These rights, among others, are reiterated in the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. The Declaration applies to every person acting to promote and protect human rights as long as they accept and apply the principles of universality and of non-violence.

97. Despite recognition in international human rights law of the legitimacy of their work, youth and student defenders continue to face severe violations of their human rights as a result of that work. The mandate holder has been monitoring the situation of youth, particularly student, activists working to protect human rights, since the mandate’s inception, with their situation and challenges having already been assessed in several reports from the mandate holder.

98. In her report to the General Assembly in 2007 (A/62/225), the former Special Representative addressed the situation of student activists in the context of the right to freedom of assembly. She noted a trend of acts of repression and retaliation against student activists engaged in protests and expressed particular concern about the brutality of the violations against this group, which in many cases amounted to torture. The young age of the students adds to the severity of the violations suffered and leaves them particularly vulnerable. Noting the high educational value of student protests as a first experience of public participation and defence of human rights, the Special Representative argued that “ensuring a conducive environment for student protests is a social investment in addition to a legal obligation” (paras. 70 and 101 (b)).

99. When the Special Rapporteur set out her vision for the mandate in 2008 (A/63/288), defenders engaged in student protests were included as a priority. In the light of recent events, notably in the Middle East and North Africa, the Special Rapporteur has decided to take a broad approach to the assessment of youth, including students, working to defend human rights. The number of communications related to this group is relatively low compared to other groups of defenders discussed in this report, but the mandate holder has observed that they are at particular risk, which is likely to increase given recent events, unless specific attention is devoted to their situation.

100. With reference to article 7 of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which states that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to develop and discuss new human rights ideas and principles and to advocate their acceptance”, the Special Rapporteur finds the contributions of youth and student defenders of particular importance. The concept of new human rights ideas and principles must be viewed in relation to the local context of human rights. The history of human rights and particularly recent events show that youth and students have a key role to play in putting new human rights ideas and principles on the national and international agenda and advocating for increased respect for human rights without discrimination.

(b) *Activities, risks and challenges faced by youth and student defenders*

101. Between December 2006 and 31 May 2011, the Special Rapporteur sent 60 communications related to violations against youth and student defenders. In 34 of the cases reported, the victims were male. In 12 instances, the victims were female. Nine cases concerned victims of both sexes, while in six cases the sex of the victim(s) was not mentioned.

102. All 60 cases raised by the mandate holder during the period reported related to violations against youth and student defenders working on a very wide range of issues, including torture, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, impunity, freedom of religion, minority rights, students’ rights, youth rights, education, women’s rights and gender issues, trade policies and other economic issues, environmental and land issues, peacebuilding and democracy promotion.

103. Of the 60 communications issued by the Special Rapporteur between 2007 and 2011, 47 involved violations of physical integrity, including killings, physical attacks, torture, ill-treatment, enforced disappearances, forced labour and excessive use of force by police and security forces during demonstrations. It should also be noted that excessive use of force related to arrests and detention led to numerous such cases being coded as violations of physical integrity.

104. Thirteen of the cases involved violations of a judicial nature. They included criminalization of the activities of human rights defenders, arrests, fines, prison sentences and concerns about due process, including under anti-terrorism legislation and broad, vague and/or allegedly fabricated criminal charges.

105. Six communications involved raids/searches of offices, confiscation of materials (including computers and paper files) and surveillance of defenders, their organizations, their homes and/or offices. Five communications included violations of psychological integrity including death threats, harassment by police, security forces and non-State actors and, in some cases, these actions targeted defenders’ family members.

106. Communications issued by the mandate holder indicate that violations were often preceded by students’ and youth’s organization of and participation in peaceful demonstrations, public appearances and speeches or the publication of articles or blog entries. General perception of youth in society, also conveyed by established media outlets, often points to their young age and lack of maturity as grounds for not giving them a say in public affairs. Youth and student movements are seen as troublemaking rather than serious actors that can fruitfully contribute to public debate.

107. In this regard, the Special Rapporteur is concerned by recent trends in several countries towards passing legislation that prohibits young people, typically below 18 or 21 years of age, from participating in public assemblies. Further legislative moves pertain to the Internet, social media and instant messaging, which are increasingly subject to control by Governments. As these tools are extensively used by youth and student defenders, restrictions are likely to create particular obstacles to their human rights work.

108. Information received by the mandate holder indicates that youth and students often work outside established structures, including established NGOs, to defend and promote human rights. Youth organizations and student movements are often informal structures with limited organizational capacity. Extensive registration processes for NGOs in several countries add to the isolation of youth organizations and may discourage them from registering as NGOs. This, in turn, limits the organizations' possibilities for obtaining funding and making connections, including with the United Nations human rights system. Youth and students generally have limited knowledge of the United Nations human rights system and regional human rights mechanisms.

109. The lack of an enabling environment for meaningful youth participation also extends to civil society. The Special Rapporteur is concerned about the lack of capacity of NGOs to address the human rights issues of young people or to effectively mobilize young people and include them in their organizations.

(c) *Overview by region*

110. Over half of the communications sent (31) were addressed to Governments in Asia, among which 14 were sent to the Islamic Republic of Iran, five were sent to China, and three to the Philippines. Nineteen of the cases concerned men as victims, while five reported women as victims and five related to victims of both sexes. The sex of the victim(s) was not reported in two cases. Allegations of violations against youth and students in Asia were for the most part related to physical integrity, which was mentioned in 26 cases. Alleged violations included killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, physical attacks and forced labour. Eight cases were judicial in nature, including criminalization of the activities of human rights defenders, arrests, prison sentences and concerns about due process, including under anti-terrorism legislation.

111. There were also two cases reported in which violations concerned psychological integrity. Youth and students allegedly targeted by such violations received threats, including death threats; were subject to harassment by police, security forces and non-State actors; and saw, in some cases, such actions target their family members. Two communications raised issues such as raids and searches of the offices of youth and student organizations, confiscation of computers, paper files and other materials from their offices, as well as surveillance of their homes and/or offices.

112. In a great majority of the cases, the alleged perpetrators were State actors, often police and, in some cases, security forces. In a few cases, it was not possible to identify the perpetrators. It is important to note that alleged violations often seemed to be linked to organization of and participation in peaceful demonstrations, public appearances and speeches or the publication of articles or blog entries.

113. By contrast, in the Americas region, where eight communications were sent, the alleged perpetrators were for the most part not identified. In a limited number of cases, State actors were the alleged perpetrators and, in a few other cases, non-State actors. As in Asia, most of the cases referred to violations of physical integrity, including killings, physical attacks and arbitrary detention. One case referred to psychological integrity, where a youth human rights defender had received death threats. Most alleged violations in the Americas were connected to the defender's participation in demonstrations or conferences. Two of the communications were addressed to Chile and another two to Mexico. Three cases reported female victims, two cases concerned male victims, and one case related to victims of both sexes. In the African region, eight communications were sent during the period. Three of these communications were sent to the Government of Zimbabwe and two were sent to the Government of Sudan. In all eight cases, the alleged perpetrators were State actors. In four cases, the victims were male, while in three cases the victims were both female and male. There were no cases with only female victims. In one case, the sex of the

victim(s) was not reported. The majority of the cases involved violations of physical integrity, including arbitrary detention, torture, ill-treatment, killings, enforced disappearances and disproportional use of force to break up demonstrations. Other violations in Africa were judicial in nature, involving broad and often vaguely defined criminal charges, fines and prison sentences. As in other regions, alleged violations often happened in the context of peaceful demonstrations, although a marked trend in Africa was violations by police when breaking up demonstrations, notably through the disproportional use of force. Participation in public youth forums and issuing of press statements were also actions that had led to the violations reported.

114. Seven communications were addressed to Governments in the Middle East and North Africa during the assessed period. Two of the communications were sent to Bahrain, and another two to Egypt. Men were the victims in all reported cases. Despite the low number of communications for this region, reported violations were wide-ranging in nature. The majority represented violations of physical integrity, including enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, ill-treatment in detention and disproportional use of force during demonstrations. Violations of a judicial nature were also reported, including prison sentences, allegedly fabricated charges and arrests. Some cases involved violations of psychological integrity, including threats and violence against defenders' family members.

115. In addition to these communications, the Special Rapporteur has issued a number of joint statements with other special procedures pertaining to the situations in several countries in the Middle East and North Africa during the first half of 2011, including Bahrain, Egypt, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (at the time), Syrian Arab Republic and Tunisia. Together with the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the Special Rapporteur called on the Syrian Arab Republic on 15 April 2011 to "immediately release the human rights defenders, journalists and bloggers, who play a crucial role in monitoring recent events and informing the public".

116. In the Europe and Central Asia region, six communications were sent to Governments during the period, of which two were sent to the Russian Federation. An important distinction from other regions was that a majority of the victims were women (four out of six). One case involved a male victim and, in another, the sex of the victim(s) was not reported. Also in contrast to other regions, the majority of alleged violations in Europe and Central Asia consisted of raids on and searches of offices, confiscation of materials, surveillance of defenders' activities and their organizations' offices and lengthy interrogations, and even refusal to allow defenders to travel abroad. There were also alleged violations of youth and students' physical integrity, including physical assaults, excessive use of force during demonstrations and arbitrary detention. There was one case involving violations of psychological integrity and one case of criminalization of defenders' activities following peaceful protests. One case involved violations of a judicial nature, more specifically prison sentences. In five of the cases, State actors were the alleged perpetrators, notably police, while non-State actors were the alleged perpetrators in one case.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

117. The Special Rapporteur is very concerned at the extraordinary risks that these groups of defenders face due to their work in defence of human rights. Most of these risks not only directly affect their physical integrity and that of their family members, but also include the abusive use of legal frameworks against them and the criminalization of their work. The Special Rapporteur is also extremely concerned at reports received indicating that State actors, including Government officials, State

security forces and the judiciary, are the perpetrators of many of the violations committed against these defenders.

A. Journalists and media workers

118. Journalists and media workers monitoring demonstrations and shedding light on violations and abuses often risk their lives. In most regions, they seem to be targeted by the same State actors that they investigate, except for the Americas where non-State actors and unknown groups emerge as the main perpetrators.

119. The monitoring role of journalists and media workers during demonstrations is essential, as it can provide an impartial and objective account of the conduct of both participants and law enforcement officials. States should grant media access to public assemblies to facilitate independent coverage.

120. Restrictions on media and press freedom, and impunity around violations against journalists and media workers defending human rights can foster a climate of intimidation, stigmatization, violence and self-censorship that can have a chilling effect on their work. States should publically recognize the role of these defenders and ensure prompt and impartial investigations and the prosecution of those responsible for violations against them.

121. If journalists or media workers violate an administrative provision, a solution should be found within the administrative civil framework. Criminal law should only be applied when strictly necessary. States should refrain from the persistent use of legislative frameworks to silence legitimate dissent on human rights issues.

122. The protection of journalists and media workers active on human rights issues should not be limited to those formally recognized as such, but should include other relevant actors, such as community media workers, bloggers and those monitoring demonstrations.

B. Defenders working on land and environmental issues

123. Defenders working on land and environmental issues are also highly exposed to attacks to their physical integrity, often by non-State actors, and many are killed because of their work on the environmental impact of extractive industries and development projects, or the right to land of indigenous peoples and minorities. The Americas seems to be the region where these defenders are most at risk.

124. States should give full recognition to the important work carried out by defenders working on land and environmental issues in trying to find a balance between economic development and respect of the environment, including the right to use land, natural wealth and resources, and the rights of certain groups, including indigenous peoples and minorities.

125. States should not tolerate the stigmatization of the work of these defenders by public officials or the media, particularly in context of social polarization, as this can foster a climate of intimidation and harassment which might encourage rejection and even violence against defenders.

126. States should combat impunity for attacks and violations against these defenders, particularly by non-State actors and those acting in collusion with them, by ensuring prompt and impartial investigations into allegations and appropriate redress and reparation to victims.

C. Youth and student defenders

127. Youth and student defenders seem to be targeted for their involvement in peaceful demonstrations and protests or the publication of articles or blog entries. They also seem to be highly exposed to physical attacks.

128. States should refrain from having their security personnel use excessive force during demonstrations. Law enforcement officials should be trained in international human rights standards and child/youth protection measures, particularly regarding crowd control during public assemblies.

129. States are encouraged to invest more in youth development and facilitate participation of youth in public affairs, e.g. through simplification of registration procedures for NGOs or providing support to youth organizations in the registration process.

130. States should facilitate and simplify notification/registration procedures for the participation of youth and students in public assemblies, including by removing prohibitions preventing youth, and in some cases children, from participating.

131. Youth and student defenders should be equipped with knowledge about human rights protection mechanisms, risk assessment skills and connections with national and international organizations.

132. NGOs should try to be youth friendly and cater to youth's needs; they should try to look at ways in which youth are mobilized, what sort of change youth expect, etc.
