



**Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation
of human rights defenders. 4 March 2020**

Mr Michel Forst, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, presented his last report, [A/HRC/43/51](#) which focused on the **situation of human rights defenders operating in conflict and post-conflict areas**. The report addressed the critical contribution of the human rights defenders, including activists, militants, journalists, bloggers, media, whistle-blowers, lawyers, prosecutors, judges, indigenous peoples, in their collective and individual struggle.

The report spelled out the applicable **normative framework** relevant for defenders, i.e. protection under international human rights law, int-l humanitarian law, int-l criminal law and int-l refugee law, called for **compliance** with the existing legal norms and standards. Despite some positive developments, the **extreme risks** to which defenders are exposed and the persistence of impunity were addressed.

Regarding his **visit to Colombia** (20 Nov to 3 Dec 2018; [A/HRC/43/51/Add.1](#)), Mr Forst announced **three main trends**: (1) high number of murders of defenders – the highest in Latin America; (2) high level of impunity for the killings; (3) constant stigmatization and criminalization of defenders. He noted that the human rights defenders **particularly at risk** are social leaders from rural areas, environmental defenders, ethnic leaders and Afro-Colombian defenders. This risk has increased in the three years since the signature of the Peace Agreement. **Colombia**, as a country concerned, indicated that tangible actions were adopted since the Presidency of I. Duque Márquez to protect social leaders and human rights defenders. **The Ombudsman's Office** of Colombia took part in the dialogue.

In his report regarding **the visit to Mongolia** (30 Apr to 13 May 2019; [A/HRC/43/51/Add.2](#)), the Special Rapporteur pointed out that the relatively safe environment he observed in the country, did not translate into a situation where human rights defenders were empowered in their activities. **Obstacles**: stigmatization, pressure, criminalization, hate speech on social media. A robust draft law to protect human rights defenders is a powerful initiative. **Mongolia**, responded as a country concerned.

Regarding his recent **visit to Peru** (21 January – 3 February 2020), Mr Forst noted good level of engagement of the government of Peru, announcing that the report will be presented in March 2021.

Mr Forst also suggested that meetings with social movements would be extremely important, and thanked the supporters of his mandate, and all the human rights defenders that he met. *"I am not the same I used to be 6 years ago – human rights defenders have transformed me"*, concluded Mr Forst.

Interactive Dialogue Participants – States:

African States: Burkina Faso, Botswana, Lesotho, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Somalia, Cameroon. **Asia-Pacific States:** Pakistan on behalf of the OIC, Afghanistan, Philippines, Pakistan, Fiji, Indonesia, Maldives, Thailand, Marshall Islands. **Middle East:** State of Palestine, Iraq, Qatar. **Eastern European States:** Croatia (o/b of a group of states), Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Latvia, Russian Federation, Albania, Georgia, Slovakia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Armenia. **Western Europe and Other States:** EU, Canada, Germany, Australia, Switzerland, Lichtenstein, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland, Sweden, Norway, Belgium, UK, Malta, Iceland, Finland, France. **Latin American and Caribbean States:** Peru (on/b of a group of states), Brazil, Cuba, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Honduras, Uruguay, Venezuela, Paraguay, Peru, Mexico.

Interactive Dialogue Participants – Other Stakeholders:

UN-Women; Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions; Human Rights Commission of Zimbabwe; Colombian Commission of Jurists; Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos; ISHR; Human Rights House Foundation; Sociedade Maranhense de Direitos Humanos; PBI Switzerland; World Organization Against Torture; Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development; RIDH; ODHACO.

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