

THE OBSERVATORY - PRESS RELEASE

“Inter-mechanisms 5.1”: enhanced cooperation will lead to better protection of human rights defenders

Paris-Geneva, November 14, 2014 - On November 12 and 13, 2014, the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders Michel Forst met with representatives of regional human rights defenders' mechanisms, in the framework of the first part of the fifth “inter-mechanisms” meeting. Enhancing cooperation between the UN mechanism and its regional counterparts was defined as a priority by the UN Special Rapporteur in his first report to the UN General Assembly in October 2014.

The “inter-mechanisms meeting 5.1” gathered representatives from the UN, the International Organisation of “La Francophonie” (OIF), the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, the OSCE/ODIHR, the European Union, as well as international NGOs. It was hosted by the OIF headquarters in Paris, and was facilitated by the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (FIDH-OMCT joint programme).

Participants reflected on ways to enhance cooperation, if not articulation, in processing submissions and public statements about human rights defenders' violations, and in enhancing the follow-up of individual communications and recommendations from country visits. They further discussed best practices and strategies to tackle the issue of arbitrary detention, particularly on emblematic cases.

The meeting also allowed for an exchange on the definition of reprisals and impunity, how they relate to each other, and how tackling impunity through accountability would ultimately mitigate the root-cause of reprisals.

Finally, participants had a discussion on the issue of NGO funding, including foreign funding, as well as on the protection of land rights defenders, echoing the topics of the 2013 and 2014 Annual Reports of the Observatory.

This meeting aimed to prepare an “inter-mechanisms meeting 5.2”, gathering mandate-holders themselves, which the Observatory will organise during the first quarter of 2015 at the OIF headquarters. Last but not least, FIDH and OMCT were invited by the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe to hold the sixth meeting in Strasbourg, and a future meeting in Warsaw, by ODIHR.