



28<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council  
Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mr.  
Michel Forst

Oral Statement Delivered by Renato Mabunga on behalf of  
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

Tuesday, 10 March 2015

Thank you Mr. President. We welcome the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders<sup>1</sup>, and congratulate him on the roadmap envisioned for his mandate in the report. We note the Special Rapporteur's concerns on tackling impunity for violations against HRDs. In several Asian countries this remains a major challenge. Added to this, the constant threat of reprisals presents a major obstacle to the legitimate work of HRDs from the region.

We welcome the Rapporteur's recommendation to governments on paying particular attention to the vulnerability of exposed group of defenders. In this regard we call your attention to examples in Asia such as that of land rights defenders in Thailand<sup>2</sup> and Cambodia<sup>3</sup>; defenders of environment in the Philippines, Mongolia and India; those working on past abuses such as enforced disappearance in Sri Lanka<sup>4</sup>, Bangladesh and Laos<sup>5</sup>; and to those working on Freedoms of Expression, Assembly and Association in Malaysia<sup>6</sup> and Myanmar<sup>7</sup>.

FORUM-ASIA calls upon Asian governments to give a prominent place to the protection of HRDs in their legislation and National Human Rights Action Plans. In line with the Special Rapporteur's recommendations to states, we reiterate our position that National Human Rights Institutions must be compliant with the Paris Principles<sup>8</sup>. Governments should create focal points and concrete protection programmes for HRDs, especially those at risk. We also call upon regional and international human rights bodies to provide greater visibility to the issues, roles and situations of HRDs and provide governments with technical assistance and appropriate tools based on observed good practices.

Lastly, Asian governments must work towards effective protection guidelines for HRDs through a process of genuine consultation where all stakeholders are included.

Thank you Mr. President.

- 
- 1 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders (A/HRC/28/63)
  - 2 FORUM-ASIA, Press Release, Thailand: regional human rights group condemns murder of land rights defender, 12 February 2015, <http://www.forum-asia.org/?p=18323>
  - 3 FORUM-ASIA, Press Release, Cambodia: Quash convictions of 11 human rights activists, 22 January 2015, <http://www.forum-asia.org/?p=18223>
  - 4 FORUM-ASIA, Press Release, Sri Lanka: Free Prominent Rights Defenders – Arrests of Ruki Fernando and Father Praveen are Attempts to Silence Critics, 17 March 2014, <http://www.forum-asia.org/?p=16854>
  - 5 FORUM-ASIA, Press Statement, Laos: Rights groups urge ASEAN to break silence on enforced disappearance of Sombath Somphone, 15 December 2014, <http://www.forum-asia.org/?p=18183>
  - 6 FORUM-ASIA, Press Release, Malaysia: Asian human rights groups and activists urge the Prime Minister to halt crackdown on freedom of expression, 27 February 2015, <http://www.forum-asia.org/?p=18405>
  - 7 FORUM-ASIA, Oral Statement, 25<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council, [Item 4: Interactive Dialogue with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Burma/Myanmar](#), 17 March 2014
  - 8 FORUM-ASIA, Oral Statement, 25<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council, [Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders](#), 10 March 2014