



General Assembly

Distr.: General
20 December 2010

Original: English

Human Rights Council

Sixteenth session

Agenda item 3

**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 Sekaggya

Summary

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Margaret Sekaggya, presents her third report to the Human Rights Council, submitted pursuant to Council resolution 7/8.

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 246 communications sent under the mandate during the past year. More detailed information on these communications is contained in addendum I to the present report.

In chapter III, the Special Rapporteur focuses on the situation of women human rights defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues, the risks and violations that they face and the perpetrators involved. After a section on the legal framework and the approach of the mandate to the challenges faced by these defenders, the Special Rapporteur analyses the risks and violations reported to the mandate. She further provides an overview of the gender-sensitivity of the protection mechanisms in place as well as on the strategies that these defenders use to keep themselves safe.

In chapter III, the Special Rapporteur outlines her conclusions and recommendations to member States, national human rights institutions, regional protection mechanisms and national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction.....	1–4	3
II. Activities during the reporting period	5–16	3
A. Communications transmitted to States.....	5	3
B. Country visits.....	6–7	3
C. Cooperation with the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations.....	8–12	4
D. Invitations by Governments.....	13–14	4
E. Cooperation with non-governmental organization.....	15–16	5
III. Women human rights defenders and those working on women’s rights or gender issues	17–103	5
A. International legal framework.....	17–21	5
B. The approach of the mandate.....	22–31	6
C. Risks and challenges faced by women human rights defenders and those working on women’s rights and gender issues	32–88	7
D. Protection mechanisms and security strategies.....	89–103	17
IV. Conclusions and recommendations.....	104–112	19

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the third submitted to the Human Rights Council by the present Special Rapporteur, and the eleventh thematic report submitted by the mandate-holder on human rights defenders since 2000. The report is submitted pursuant to Council resolution 7/8.
2. The mandate has consistently addressed the specificities of the situation of women human rights defenders and the particular challenges they face. But in the present report, the Special Rapporteur focuses, for the first time, explicitly and solely on the situation of women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues.
3. The report reviews the international legal framework as well as the approach of the mandate to the particular situation of women human rights defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues. The report further examines the risks that these defenders face, identifies the nature of the activities of the reported victims, the alleged violations and the perpetrators involved. The report also looks at the existing protection mechanisms and the strategies that these defenders use to keep themselves safe.
4. For the preparation of this report, the Special Rapporteur has analysed the communications sent by the mandate during the 2004-2009 period and also sent a questionnaire to States, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and intergovernmental and regional organizations on the situation of women human rights defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues. The Special Rapporteur would like to thank all States and organizations that have responded to this questionnaire. Part of this report is derived from the answers received and, in order to better reflect the situation of women human rights defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues in each region, a compilation of the replies appears in addendum 3 of the present report.

II. Activities during the reporting period

A. Communications transmitted to States

5. Between 11 December 2009 and 8 December 2010, the Special Rapporteur sent 246 communications. Communications were sent to 73 States, and, at the time of writing, 100 responses had been received, which indicates only a 40 per cent response rate. All communications sent during the period covered by this report, as well as responses received between 11 February 2010 and 8 February 2011, will be included in addendum 1 to the present report.

B. Country visits

6. During the reporting period, the Special Rapporteur visited Armenia from 12 to 18 June 2010. A separate report on this visit has been submitted to the sixteenth session of the Human Rights Council as addendum 2 to the present report.

Pending requests

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

2004), Nepal (2003, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2009), Pakistan (2003, 2007, 2008, 2010), the Philippines (2008, 2010), the Russian Federation (2004), Singapore (2002, 2004), Sri Lanka (2008, 2010), the Syrian Arab Republic (2008, 2010), Thailand (2010), Tunisia (2002, 2004, 2008, 2010), Turkmenistan (2003, 2004), Uzbekistan (2001, 2004, 2007), the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (2007, 2008, 2010) and Zimbabwe (2002, 2004, 2008, 2010). 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.

C. Cooperation with the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations

8. 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.

9. In its resolution 13/22 dated 15 April 2010, the Human Rights Council took note of the second joint report (A/HRC/13/63) on technical assistance to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the examination of the situation in the east of the country by the Special Rapporteur and six other thematic special procedures mandate holders. The Council invited the thematic special procedures mandate-holders to report to the Council during its sixteenth session on the developments in respect of that situation.

10. From 28 June to 2 July 2010, the Special Rapporteur attended the seventeenth annual meeting of the special procedures mandate-holders, held in Geneva.

11. On 21 October 2010, the Special Rapporteur presented her third report to the General Assembly (A/65/223). The report focused on the responsibility for human rights violations against defenders by non-State actors, including armed groups, private corporations, individuals and the media. The report further analysed the types of violations that they commit and argued that the State has a duty to protect human rights defenders from violations committed by non-State actors in specific situations.

12. On 8-9 December 2010, a staff member of OHCHR participated in the inter-mechanisms meeting, which was also attended by representatives of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Council of Europe and the European Commission. The event took place in Warsaw and was hosted by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

D. Invitations by Governments

13. On 4 February 2010, the Special Rapporteur attended a working session in the Spanish Congress on Parliamentary Mechanisms to protect human rights defenders.

14. From 17 to 19 November 2010, the Special Rapporteur was invited by the Special Secretariat for Human Rights of the Presidency of the Republic of Brazil to the International Seminar on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, which took place in Brasilia. The event was attended by the Minister of the Secretariat for Human Rights, members of the Human Rights Commission of the Senate and the House of Representatives, international NGOs and members of civil society to exchange views and experiences on protection of human rights defenders.

E. Cooperation with non-governmental organizations

15. The Special Rapporteur continued the fruitful cooperation of the mandate with civil society at the 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 OHCHR staff member participate.

16. On 25 January 2010, the Special Rapporteur attended a public hearing at the European Parliament in Brussels on the European Union's support to human rights defenders. From 10 to 12 February, she attended the Fifth Dublin Platform for Human Rights Defenders. On 3 May, she attended the international workshop in Geneva on enhancing cooperation between regional and international mechanisms organized by the National Institutions Unit of OHCHR. From 6 to 10 September, the Special Rapporteur attended the Pacific Regional Consultation and Training for Human Rights Defenders in Suva, Fiji. From 25 to 26 November, she participated in the National Consultation of Women Human Rights Defenders in Nepal. From 2 to 4 December, the Special Rapporteur participated at the Forth Regional Human Rights Defenders Forum in the Philippines.

III. Women human rights defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues

A. International legal framework

17. The rights of women to participate in public life, including through the promotion and protection of human rights, is contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as asserted in various international treaties, foremost among them the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

18. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" and article 2 affirms that everyone, without distinction in terms of sex, is entitled to the rights set forth therein, which include, inter alia, the rights to freedom of expression, association, assembly, and participation in Government.

19. Similarly, article 3 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that "the States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights set forth in the present Covenant", which also guarantees and expands upon the aforementioned rights. Furthermore, article 3 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provides that the State Parties to the Covenant must "ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights set forth" in the Covenant.

20. Article 7 (c) of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women requires that States Parties "take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, [...] ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right [...] to participate in non-Governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country".

21. These rights, among others, are reiterated in 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, also known as the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the General Assembly on 8 March 1999. The Declaration applies to every man and woman acting to promote and protect human rights as long as they accept and apply the principles of universality of and non-violence.

B. The approach of the mandate

22. Notwithstanding the legal recognition of the legitimacy of their work, women defenders continue to face significant challenges. Since its inception, the mandate has, both in its thematic and mission reports and other aspects of its work, consistently addressed the specificities of the situation of women human rights defenders and the particular challenges they face.¹

23. In this regard, the mandate holders have reiterated on several occasions that women defenders are more at risk of suffering certain forms of violence and other violations, prejudice, exclusion, and repudiation than their male counterparts. This is often due to the fact that women defenders are perceived as challenging accepted socio-cultural norms, traditions, perceptions and stereotypes about femininity, sexual orientation, and the role and status of women in society.² Their work is often seen as challenging “traditional” notions of the family which can serve to normalize and perpetuate forms of violence and oppression of women. This can, in certain contexts, lead to hostility or lack of support from the general population,³ as well as the authorities.

24. As pointed out by the former Special Representative in her 2002 report to the Commission on Human Rights, the violations faced by women defenders may themselves take a gender-specific form, ranging from verbal abuse based on their sex, to sexual abuse and rape. Cases of the latter are particularly prevalent in situations of conflict, which are often characterized by an environment of complete impunity for perpetrators. Further, in certain contexts, if a women human rights defender is subjected to rape or sexual abuse as a result of her work, she may be perceived by her extended family as having brought shame on both the family and the wider community.⁴ Indeed, even when no rape or sexual abuse has occurred, women defenders are often subjected to stigmatization and ostracism by community leaders, faith-based groups, families and communities who consider them to be jeopardizing religion, honour or culture through their work.

25. In her 2007 report to the General Assembly (A/62/225), the Special Representative also highlighted the violations faced by women defenders in the context of their exercise of the right to freedom of assembly; particular note was made in this regard of the frequency with which instances of gender-based violence occurred, and the alarming proportion of violations and harassment of women defenders related to celebrations on International Women’s Day.⁵

26. This attention to the situation of women human rights defenders was further mandated by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 7/8 in which, when renewing the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for a further three years, it requested that the Special

¹ See for example E/CN.4/2006/95 and A/HRC/4/37

² See for example E/CN.4/2002/106

³ Ibid, see also A/59/401 and E/CN.4/1999/68

⁴ OHCHR fact sheet No. 29: “Human Rights Defenders: protecting the right to defend human rights”

⁵ A/62/225

Rapporteur “integrate a gender perspective throughout the work of his/her mandate, paying particular attention to the situation of women human rights defenders”.

27. Furthermore, in her report to the General Assembly of 2008 (A/63/288), in which she outlined her vision and priorities for her mandate, the Special Rapporteur reiterated once again the greater risks faced by women defenders, particularly those working in the area of women’s rights, and stated that “analysis of the gender dimension of the work carried out in the defence of human rights is fundamental to addressing the protection needs and the legitimacy gaps that may affect women defenders” (ibid., p. 20, para. 9).

28. In its resolutions relating to the mandate, the General Assembly has on various occasions expressed its grave concern regarding the saliency of gender-based violence and the other risks faced by women defenders.⁶ This concern has been echoed by the Human Rights Council, which recognized in its resolution 13/13 “the immediate need to put an end to and take concrete steps to prevent threats, harassment, violence, including gender-based violence”, and encouraged States to strengthen mechanisms for consultation and dialogue with women human rights defenders..

29. As stated in several articles of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and, most notably in its article 12(2), the primary responsibility for developing such mechanisms, and indeed specific measures for the protection of women human rights defenders and human rights defenders in general, lies with the State. The primacy of the role of the State in promoting and protecting human rights has also been recalled on numerous occasions by the Commission on Human Rights, Human Rights Council, and General Assembly in their resolutions relating to the mandate.

30. Previous analyses of the situation of women human rights defenders have tended to focus on the situation of female human rights defenders, i.e. women who, individually or in association with others, act to promote or protect human rights, including women’s rights. However, this report will have a somewhat broader scope and will include female defenders but also male human rights defenders working on women’s rights as well as on gender issues. Furthermore, account will also be taken of violations against spouses, partners and family members of both female defenders and male human rights defenders.

31. The acknowledgment of the particular situation and role of women human rights defenders and those defending women’s rights or gender issues implies the upholding of the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination. This is essential to recognizing the specific challenges and risks this group of defenders faces and to ensure their protection.

C. Risks and challenges faced by women human rights defenders and those working on women’s rights and gender issues

32. This section focuses primarily on an analysis of the communications sent by the mandate during the 2004-2009 period.⁷ The analysis is based upon the communications sent during this period which addressed violations against women defenders and those working on women’s rights or gender issues and against their family members, identifying the nature of the activities carried by the reported victims, as well as the alleged violations and perpetrators, with a view to identifying possible trends.

⁶ See General Assembly resolutions 62/152 and 64/163

⁷ A/HRC/13/22/Add.1; A/HRC/10/12/Add.1; A/HRC/7/28/Add.1; A/HRC/4/37/Add.1; E/CN.4/2006/95/Add.1; E/CN.4/2005/101/Add.1; E/CN.4/2004/94/Add.3

33. In addition, the Special Rapporteur has used the information received in the form of replies to the questionnaire sent to Governments and relevant stakeholders. In this connection, she wishes to thank all those stakeholders that have cooperated with this initiative. In this section of the report, in order to avoid duplication, the information provided through the questionnaires has been explicitly highlighted when it was deemed that it provided additional insight. Where it is deemed necessary, numbers of communications and States to which they were sent have been mentioned.

34. The data used and trends identified herein are necessarily partial as they are based on the allegations received and acted upon by the mandate as well as on the information provided in the replies to the questionnaires received, thus it does not represent the full reality of the situation of women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues 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 allegations referred to in this report, including in cases wherein the facts may have been disputed.

35. Between 2004 and 2009, the Special Rapporteur sent an average of 350 communications to Governments per year, including allegation letters and urgent appeals. Of these, about one third of the communications concerned women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues (target group).

Table: Communications concerning women defenders

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total communications sent</i>	<i>Target group</i>	<i>Percentage of total</i>
2004	315	93	29.5
2005	315	95	30.2
2006	370	144	38.9
2007	372	110	29.6
2008	489	179	36.6
2009	270	113	41.9
Total	2,131	734	34.4

Source: Communications reports 2004-2009

36. In this regard, the communications sent by the mandate during the 2004-2009 period concerning this group of defenders are analysed below. Figures provided in the different sections are the 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 as well as the alleged perpetrators.

1. Most common activities of those who face violations

37. A large number of communications sent during the period (196) concerned alleged violations against defenders, including males, working on women's rights or gender issues, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual issues (LGBT). This group is thoroughly heterogeneous, including women and men carrying out a vast range of activities related to women's rights, including those working on issues related to sexual and reproductive rights; organizations dealing with violence against women, rehabilitation and impunity related to violence, rape and sexual violence, women's shelters caring for victims of the above; and journalists and bloggers writing on women's rights issues.

38. The largest number of communications sent (72) concerning defenders working on women's rights and gender-related issues was sent to countries in the Asian region, most

notably to the Islamic Republic of Iran (31 communications); China (10 communications); Nepal (eight communications), and Pakistan (six communications). In this region, the alleged violations against women defenders and those working on women's rights and gender issues were mostly judicial by nature, including arrests, judicial harassment, administrative detentions, and sentences to prison. However, violations by non-State actors were also alleged, including intimidation, attacks, death threats, and killings by armed individuals, family and community members, and unidentified individuals.

39. By contrast, defenders working on these issues in the Americas, where 51 communications were sent in this regard, seem to face a largely different set of risks, predominantly threats, death threats, physical attacks, killings and attempted killings. Alleged perpetrators were largely reported to be unknown or unidentified individuals, occasionally armed, often with reported links to non-State actors, including paramilitaries.

40. A smaller number of communications regarding defenders working on these issues (33) were sent to countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The largest number of these concerned defenders in Zimbabwe. Alleged violations of a judicial nature were reported against defenders working on these issues in the Sudan and Uganda (particularly with regard to LGBT defenders). Communications were also sent to the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo where women's rights defenders faced risks such as attacks, raids, death threats, attempted rape, and sexual violence.

41. In the Middle East and North African region, the 13 communications sent indicate that women's rights defenders in Iraq face risks such as killings, death threats, and armed attacks. By contrast, activists for women's rights in Bahrain, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates reported harassment of a more judicial nature, such as arrests, violations of freedom of assembly, and travel bans.

42. The 28 communications sent regarding defenders working on women's rights or gender issues in Europe and Central Asia predominantly concerned LGBT activists in East and Central European countries including Poland, Moldova, Serbia, and the Russian Federation, as well as women's rights activists operating in Uzbekistan and Belarus. Alleged violations against LGBT activists in this region generally related to freedom of assembly or association, such as denial of permits for peaceful rallies or refusal to register an organization. Other reported violations against women's rights defenders were again largely judicial by nature, including arrests, detentions, judicial harassment, and conviction.

43. During the period, the mandate sent 47 communications regarding defenders working on LGBT issues. Aside from the aforementioned alleged violations related to freedom of assembly and association, killings of LGBT human rights defenders were alleged in five communications, with rape and sexual violence, including against males, being reported in a further six. Various other communications detailed many instances of threats, death threats, physical attacks and violence, and stigmatization. Further, the criminalization of homosexuality has in some countries led to alleged arrests, torture and ill-treatment, including of a sexual nature, while in other countries it effectively prevented defenders from engaging in any advocacy for LGBT rights.

44. The mandate has also received and acted upon allegations of violations against defenders working in areas of sexual and reproductive rights. All seven communications sent from the mandate regarding specifically sexual and reproductive rights concerned Chinese human rights defenders advocating against the alleged use of forced abortions and sterilizations. However, responses to the questionnaire sent in preparation for the report have provided further information regarding defenders working on these issues in other countries and regions.

45. According to the information received, human rights defenders who work on sexual and reproductive rights face risks including harassment, discrimination, stigma,

criminalization and physical violence. As part of this group, medical and health professionals, by providing sexual and reproductive health services, ensure that women can exercise their reproductive rights. In certain countries, these health professionals, as a result of their work, are regularly targeted and suffer harassment, intimidation and physical violence. In some countries, these attacks perpetrated by non-State actors have led to killings and attempted killings of medical professionals.

46. A specific group that also appears to be at particular risk is that formed by women working in the legal profession, including lawyers, judges and paralegals. Between 2004 and 2009, the mandate sent 81 communications regarding the situation of women defenders from these professional categories. Women defenders with this profile appear to be more affected in certain countries, notably the Islamic Republic of Iran (nine communications), Colombia (eight communications), China (eight communications), the Russian Federation (seven communications) and Tunisia (six communications).

47. Women journalists and media professionals working on human rights issues also appear to be exposed to risk 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 violations of human rights, and women bloggers. The mandate sent communications about 70 cases concerning this category during the six-year period. In certain countries, a large proportion of communications sent concerned women working as journalists or who were engaged in other media-related activities. Women working as journalists were also the subject of various communications sent to, inter alia, Tunisia (seven communications), Colombia (seven communications), the Islamic Republic of Iran (seven communications), Belarus (five communications) and the Russian Federation (five communications).

48. The mandate also sent 64 communications concerning the situation of women defenders working on issues of impunity and access to justice, including witnesses and victims of human rights violations seeking redress, as well as the lawyers, individuals and organizations representing or supporting them. This group seems to be particularly at risk in certain countries in Europe, Central Asia and the Americas. Over half of the communications in this regard were sent to the Russian Federation (15 cases), Colombia (14 cases) and Mexico (nine cases).

49. The mandate also sent 58 communications regarding cases of women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues denouncing abuses in contexts of military conflict, counter-terrorism and other situations of widespread violence. This group includes defenders working in conflict-affected countries and regions such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan, Colombia, the North Caucasus, and post-conflict situations such as in the Balkan countries (most notably Serbia) and Nepal. This group includes those monitoring and reporting violations, providing of aid and assistance to victims, addressing the gender dimensions of conflict, and combating impunity, including by bringing cases before international bodies such as the International Court of Justice and European Court of Human Rights.

50. From 2004 to 2009, the mandate also sent 42 communications concerning women defenders working on often overlapping human rights issues related to imprisonment, including political prisoners, the death penalty, and the alleged prevalence of the practice of torture or ill-treatment.

51. Women working in trade unions, and other labour rights activists also appear to be exposed to regular violations and severe risks as a result of their work, although it appears that this is so in certain regions more than in others. This group was the subject of 40 communications sent by the mandate, including six communications regarding alleged violations against female relatives and partners of male trade unionists and labour rights

activists. The largest proportion of these (13 communications) was sent to Colombia, with others being sent to countries including Gambia, Guatemala, Honduras, Myanmar and Zimbabwe.

52. The mandate also sent 40 communications concerning alleged violations against women defenders advocating the rights of indigenous communities, community leaders and those advocating for the rights of women within indigenous communities. The vast majority of such defenders worked in American countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Mexico, but also in other countries, notably India and the Philippines, among others.

53. A related group of women defenders are those working on environmental issues, including access to land, were the subject of 33 communications sent by the mandate during this period, a large majority of which were sent to countries in the Americas. The work carried out by these women typically includes advocating the preservation of lands and communities which may be threatened by large-scale industrial projects, generally relating to the extractive and energy-related industries, such as mines, hydroelectric dams, and pipelines.

54. Family members of women defenders, along with female relatives and associates of male defenders, are also commonly targeted as a way of curtailing the activities of the defenders. In some circumstances, attacks against family members and children of women defenders are reflective of traditional gender stereotypes of women as mothers and caregivers. The mandate has on many occasions expressed concern regarding the physical and psychological integrity of family members of women defenders and female relatives and associates of male defenders. From 2004 to 2009, some 86 communications sent by the mandate dealt with violations against family members or associates of women defenders, or female family members and/or associates of male human rights defenders.

2. Risks and violations reported

(a) Threats, death threats and killings

55. During the period (2004-2009) cited, the mandate sent 292 communications that expressed concern in relation to threats and death threats against women defenders or those working on women's rights or gender-related issues and their family members. Of these, 130 explicitly concerned death threats.

56. Threats and death threats – which may be delivered in person, by telephone, in printed pamphlets or mock obituaries and electronically via text message or e-mail -- can be seen as representative of risks, but also as violations in themselves which may significantly harm the psychological integrity of the defender, as well as possibly predate an attack. These threats are directed not only at the defenders themselves but also their family members, as well as female family members of male human rights defenders.

57. Of the aforementioned 292 communications sent regarding threats and death threats in the 2004-2009 period, slightly more than half concerned defenders working in the Americas. Of these, large numbers pertained to Colombia (45 communications), Mexico (27 communications), Guatemala (18 communications), Brazil (14 communications), Honduras (12 communications), and Peru (10 communications), among others. The prevalence of explicit death threats was particularly notable in this region.

58. The human rights activities carried out by those subjected to threats and death threats in the Americas region ranged very widely. Among the groups which appear to be most at risk are women defenders working to fight impunity for alleged human rights violations, particularly in Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru. Moreover, those working on indigenous rights also appear to be at risk, particularly in Brazil, Chile,

Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Honduras; trade unionists, particularly in Colombia and Guatemala; and women's rights and/or LGBT defenders in the region.

59. Threats and death threats were also reported in all other regions, although in much smaller numbers. In Asian countries, threats were reported in countries such as the Islamic Republic of Iran (eight communications), the Philippines (five communications), Sri Lanka (five communications), Nepal (five communications), China (four communications), and Pakistan (four communications), among others. The activities carried out by the WHRDs subjected to threats in this region varied widely by country, including women's rights activists, primarily in the Islamic Republic of Iran; and indigenous and other minority activists, particularly in the Islamic Republic of Iran, China and the Philippines, among others. Explicit death threats were reported in the Philippines (three communications), Sri Lanka (two communications), Nepal (two communications), the Islamic Republic of Iran (two communications), Pakistan (two communications), China, the Maldives, and Malaysia.

60. In Europe, of the 37 communications sent regarding alleged threats and death threats, some 23 concerned defenders working in the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan. In the Russian Federation, to which 13 such communications were sent, those most at risk appear to have been those working on impunity and human rights issues related to the conflict in Chechnya and the North Caucasus region generally, as well as those working with minority groups and those involved in bringing cases before the European Court of Human Rights. The nature of the threats included death threats, and threats of criminal prosecution.

61. In Uzbekistan, to which 10 communications were sent regarding alleged threats and death threats, a wide range of women defenders were allegedly targeted as well as a significant number of family members. Among these, explicit death threats were common, along with others including threats of committal to psychiatric hospitals, threats of violence against family members, and threats of eviction. A further 14 communications were sent to other European countries, including four to Serbia and the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), and two to Turkey.

62. During the 2004-2009 period, the mandate sent some 29 communications regarding threats and death threats against this group of defenders in sub-Saharan African countries. Half of these communications concerned those working in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In this context, those regularly targeted included members of organizations working on women's rights issues, particularly impunity for sexual and other forms of violence against women in the context of the armed conflict, and their family members, along with wives and other female family members of male human rights defenders. The threats delivered included numerous death threats and often accompanied attacks or break-ins at the home of the defender in question. The sources of such threats were often armed individuals and members of the armed groups party to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including State forces and police. A similar pattern of threats against defenders working on women's rights, albeit less frequently reported, was notable in Zimbabwe, primarily women's rights defenders. Other communications were also sent to the Central African Republic, Kenya and Uganda.

63. Finally, 18 communications were sent regarding threats and death threats against those working in the Middle East and North Africa. Of these, eight concerned defenders working on women's rights, while various others concerned women defenders working on issues such as the rights of minorities, refugees, as well as on enforced and involuntary disappearances.

64. An alarming number of women human rights defenders and their relatives have paid the highest price for their work. During the 2004-2009 period, 39 communications were

sent regarding killings of one or more defenders, their family members, or female relatives of male human rights defenders, along with thirty-five communications regarding attempted killings.

65. Women human rights defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues in the Americas appear to be most at risk of being killed or having an attempt made on their lives. The largest number of these communications was sent to Colombia (12 regarding killings, 11 regarding attempted killings), while other cases were reported in Brazil (two regarding killings, four regarding attempted killings); Guatemala (two regarding killings, two regarding attempted killings); and Honduras (two regarding killings, two regarding attempted killings); with attempted killings also being reported in Mexico (two), Chile (two), Ecuador (two), and Peru (two). Those most at risk appear to be women trade unionists and women labour rights activists, particularly in Colombia and Guatemala; women indigenous rights activists, particularly in Colombia, Mexico, Chile, and Guatemala; and women environmental and land rights activists, particularly in Brazil and Colombia, along with family members and associates of all the aforementioned defenders.

66. Outside of the Americas, 2009 saw an alarming rise in comparison to previous years in the number of allegations received regarding murders of women human rights defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues in the Russian Federation: four communications regarding alleged killings were sent in 2009. In this context, those targeted were often working on human rights in Chechnya and the North Caucasus generally, along with journalists. Other killings and attempted killings were reported in communications sent to the Philippines (eight communications), Iraq (two communications), India (two communications), Nepal (one communication), Sri Lanka (two communications), Israel (one communication), and the Congo (one communication), with further attempted killings being reported in communications sent to Pakistan (two communications), Bangladesh (one communication), the United States of America (one communication, concerning Iraq under U.S. Administration), and France (one communication, concerning French Guyana) during the 2004-2009 period.

67. Allegations on attacks against the physical integrity of this group of defenders by non-State groups and individuals were received during the 2004-2009 period, cases of which were raised in 52 communications. About half of these cases were reported in Central and South American countries. Those most at risk in this region appear to include women working as journalists, such as those critical of paramilitary groups in Colombia; women advocating for workers' rights in Mexico, along with women lawyers, indigenous and pro-democracy defenders. Physical attacks were also reported in Europe and Central Asia (10 communications), the Middle East and North Africa (six communications), Asia (five communications), and Africa (three communications).

68. The sources of threats, death threats, killings, attempted killings and physical attacks are generally unknown or unidentified, although it has been reported that they are individuals or groups who are in some way affected or linked to those affected by the work carried out by the defenders they target. In this regard, paramilitary and other armed groups, particularly in the Colombian context, are often the source of killings and death threats, which may target large swathes of civil society, often accompanied by the stigmatization of the work defenders do and declaring them to be "military targets". In a few instances in the Americas, law enforcement or military officials were also identified as the perpetrators of killings, threats and death threats. In such cases, the women defenders in question were generally working on issues related to impunity for alleged violations carried out by State agents. Similarly, in Europe, the perpetrators of killings remain unknown; those responsible for threats and attacks were occasionally alleged to be State agents and, in some instances, far-right political extremists and religious groups.

69. It is worth noting that aside from non-State actors, a large proportion of reported threats and death threats in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East and North Africa were attributed to State agents, including police and other authorities. In addition, other reported perpetrators of killings, attempted killings and physical attacks were unknown individuals, but also political activists and extremists, members of the community and family members.

(b) *Arrest, detention and criminalization*

70. Analysis of the communications sent in the 2004-2009 period reveals a worrying trend of criminalization of the activities carried out by women human rights defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues throughout the world, although in certain regions much more than in others. In the above period, some 417 communications were sent by the mandate concerning allegations of arrest and criminalization of their work. Of these, 256 communications reported arrests and 166 reported further acts of criminalization including criminal investigations, charges, trials, and sentences varying from fines to administrative detentions to lengthy prison terms.

71. Allegations of irregularities relating to due process and fair trial procedure were also commonplace during this period. Some 87 communications sent by the mandate included allegations of procedural irregularities following arrest, as well as the absence of some of the basic elements of due process including, alleged incommunicado and unacknowledged detention, lack of access to a lawyer, unfair trials and wrongful sentencing.

72. From the communications sent by the mandate, it is possible to identify those particularly at risk of arrest and other forms of criminalization as a result of their work. By contrast to Central and South America where threats and death threats are most commonly reported, arrests and criminalization were most commonly reported in Asia and the Pacific, with 127 communications concerning arrests and 64 concerning further acts of criminalization, with certain overlap of cases having references to both.

73. Thirty-six communications were sent to China regarding alleged arrests and 17 regarding other forms of criminalization. Those at risk include women defenders working on the rights of religious and national minorities, women's rights, including family planning and reproductive rights, housing rights, democratic reform, and impunity for alleged use of torture, among various others. Of particular concern is the frequency with which it was alleged that such defenders were sentenced to prison terms, including periods of administrative detention, often referred to as "re-education through labour".

74. Women human rights defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues also appear particularly at risk of arrest or legal action in the Islamic Republic of Iran, to which some 30 communications were sent regarding alleged arrest and 18 regarding further criminalization. Those most at risk included women's rights activists and many alleged arrests took place in the context of peaceful public action such as demonstrations or during the collection of petition signatures.

75. Allegations of arrests and further judicial harassment were also sent to Myanmar (12 and seven respectively); India (eight and three respectively); Pakistan (six and two respectively); Philippines (five and three respectively); Vietnam (three and three respectively), and Nepal (five reported arrests and detentions) among others.

76. Considerably smaller numbers of arrests and other acts of criminalization were reported in other regions. During the 2004-2009 period, 35 communications were sent to European and Central Asian States regarding alleged arrests and detentions of this group of defenders, and 43 regarding judicial harassment and other forms of criminalization, with an overlap of cases concerning both.

77. With regard to arrests, detentions and criminalization, the majority of these communications were sent to the Russian Federation (10 communications), Belarus (eight communications), and Uzbekistan (eight communications). In this regard, eleven communications were sent to the Russian Federation, 11 to Uzbekistan, and 10 to Belarus. In this context, those most at risk of arrest appear to include women defenders working on human rights issues related to the conflict in the North Caucasus; pro-democracy advocates, particularly in Belarus; women's rights defenders in Belarus and Uzbekistan, those denouncing violations to the European Court of Human Rights, particularly in the Russian Federation, and women journalists in all three countries. In other European countries, smaller numbers of communications concerning allegations of arrests, and detentions were sent to, inter alia, Turkey, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and Spain. Communications regarding other forms of criminalization and judicial harassment were sent to Azerbaijan, France, Greece, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, and Turkey.

78. Some 38 communications were sent by the mandate concerning arrests in sub-Saharan Africa, along with 18 concerning other kinds of judicial harassment and criminalization, with some overlap. Of these, the largest number concerned defenders working in Zimbabwe, to which 18 communications were sent regarding arrests and nine regarding further legal action against them, with considerable overlap. The majority of these concerned women's rights activists, the arrests generally taking place in the context of peaceful public demonstrations and charges usually concerning supposed public order or traffic-related offences. Other arrests and acts of criminalization were the subject of communications sent to, inter alia, the Sudan (seven and two respectively), Ethiopia (four and one respectively), and the Gambia (three and two respectively).

79. During the 2004-2009 period, 28 communications were sent regarding arrests and detentions of women human rights defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues in the Americas, along with 22 concerning further criminalization of human rights defenders. Regarding arrests and detentions, those most at risk appear to be women activists for indigenous rights, particularly in Chile along with other women community leaders, campesino and rural activists, environmentalists, and lawyers. Similarly, indigenous activists appear to be at risk, particularly in the Chilean context. During 2004-2009, the mandate sent six communications regarding the criminalization of women working on indigenous issues in Chile. Such criminalization usually involved charges and trials based on supposed public order offences related to the right of assembly, and, on occasion, terrorism-related charges.

80. In the Middle East and North Africa, 23 communications were sent to States regarding arrests and detentions of this group of defenders. Those most at risk appear to include Saharawi activists in Morocco, having been the subject of five communications; women's rights activists in Saudi Arabia, having been the subject of three communications; and human rights defenders generally in Tunisia, to which four communications were sent regarding arrests and detentions. Concerning the subsequent criminalization of the activities of these defenders, five communications were sent to Tunisia, of which four detailed trials and convictions of WHRDs. Judicial harassment, trials, and convictions were also noted in communications sent to Bahrain (three), Saudi Arabia (two), Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, and the United Arab Emirates.

81. The prevalence of the alleged use of torture, as well as other forms of ill-treatment and mistreatment of women human rights defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues while in detention is alarming. During the stated period, 149 such allegations were noted in communications from the mandate in this regard. Several such cases (22) pertained to detained or imprisoned defenders in China; of these, there were a notable number of alleged incidences of physical attacks and beatings by inmates, who had reportedly been ordered to do so by prison guards. Other violations reported in China have

included beatings by law enforcement officials, the use of torture as a disciplinary measure, denial of adequate medical care in detention, forced medication and sleep deprivation. Among the alleged victims of such treatment were pro-democracy activists, defenders working on reproductive and housing rights, and the rights of religious, national, and ethnic minorities.

82. In Uzbekistan, to which 11 communications regarding alleged torture or other mistreatment were sent, there emerged a worrying trend of the alleged committal of women defenders to psychiatric institutions, wherein they may be subjected to forced medication, as a form of punishment for their work, along with other forms of mistreatment such as assaults and beatings – which in one instance allegedly induced a miscarriage in the pregnant wife of a human rights defender – or sleep deprivation. The method of confining women defenders to psychiatric facilities has also allegedly been employed in countries such as the Russian Federation and Viet Nam.

83. A large number of communications related to allegations of excessive use of force and other forms of mistreatment by police during arrests and detentions. In this regard, aside from the aforementioned countries, many of the reported violations occurred in the Islamic Republic of Iran, primarily against women’s rights activists, in Chile; India, and Myanmar among others. As noted above, such violence was even employed against pregnant defenders. In the given period, three incidents were reported to the Special Rapporteur in which alleged physical violence by law enforcement officials against pregnant women led to miscarriages. Many other violations reportedly occurred during and following police crackdowns on peaceful demonstrations and protests. In this connection, a significant number of communications related to Zimbabwe but also to Belarus, Chile, Myanmar, and Nepal, among others.

84. During the stated period, in the Middle East and North Africa region, primarily in Tunisia, but also in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt and Morocco, the communications sent seem to point to a trend of the use of physical violence against women human rights defenders and those working on women’s rights or gender issues by law enforcement officials. Such acts, however, did not usually take place in the context of an arrest or detention; rather, there appears to be a pattern of sporadic beatings as a form of punishment or intimidation, or occasionally to prevent meetings or assemblies from taking place.

(c) *Stigmatization*

85. Aside from the “political” stigmatization to which both women defenders and their male counterparts are subjected in certain contexts, including accusations of being fronts for guerrilla movements, terrorists, political extremists, separatists, foreign countries or interests, women human rights defenders often face further stigmatization by virtue of their sex or the gender- or sexuality-based rights they advocate. As noted above, such work can be perceived as challenging established socio-cultural norms, tradition or perceptions about the role and status of women in society. As a result of this, women defenders often find themselves and their work subjected to stigmatization by both State and non-State actors. A common accusation directed in particular at those working on women’s rights, gender issues, and LGBT rights, is the assertion that these defenders are somehow advocating or attempting to import “foreign” or “Western” values which contradict national or regional culture. State agents or representatives are often alleged to be responsible for such stigmatization.

(d) *Sexual violence and rape*

86. As both mandate holders have reiterated on various occasions, female human rights defenders are subject to particular risks to which their male counterparts are not so greatly exposed, foremost among these being the risk of rape, sexual abuse, and other forms of

sexual violence and harassment. During the 2004-2009 period, the mandate sent 26 communications regarding cases of rape, threatened rape, or other forms of sexual violence and harassment against women defenders. However, of these, six communications concerned abuses of this kind against LGBT activists.

87. In 2005, the mandate sent a communication regarding the systematic use of sexual and other forms of violence against women defenders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Aside from this, two other cases of threatened and attempted rape were reported from the DRC, along with one attempted rape of a women defender's daughter in the Central African Republic, and the threatened rape of an LGBT activist in Kenya. Sexual assaults, including instances of gang rape in detention of LGBT activists, were also reported in Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, India, and Nepal. The alleged perpetrators of these acts were mostly unknown/ unidentified but also included members of the police, military, armed groups, or local members of the community.

88. In certain cultural and social contexts, issues relating to rape and sexual abuse of women remain taboo. Women working on such issues, including victims thereof seeking redress, organizations representing victims or granting them shelter, and organizations working with sex workers, among others, often face a hostile response from both society and State as a result of their work. In this connection, 19 communications were sent regarding defenders working on issues related to sexual abuse, rape, and prostitution. Of these, six detailed alleged violations against rape victims seeking redress or publicizing the issue, or their lawyers and two being sent to Pakistan, while others were sent to India, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Guatemala. The alleged violations in these cases included an arrest, threats, harassment, and a travel ban.

D. Protection mechanisms and security strategies

89. This section summarizes the information provided by the different stakeholders regarding the existing protection mechanisms in place and their responsiveness to the specific needs of women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues as well as the strategies that they use to keep themselves safe. This information was provided through the responses to the questionnaire sent by the Special Rapporteur to States and other stakeholders.

1. National protection mechanisms

90. In general, responses received indicate that in the vast majority of cases there are no specific mechanisms in place to protect women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues or, where they do exist, they are often hampered by a lack of implementation, political will or gender-sensitivity.

91. References were often made to general legislative frameworks, special programmes and databases designed for the protection of women in general against violence and discrimination. References were also made to programmes for the protection of victims and witnesses in order to address the situation of women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues. While this is appreciated, the Special Rapporteur considers that it is not sufficient to effectively address the particular challenges and needs of this group.

92. More specifically, existing protection measures and mechanisms are often limited and lack a gender-specific approach. In the Americas region, it has been reported that one of the most restricting factors affecting the efficiency of the current protection mechanisms is that they do not recognize non-State actors as part of the group of perpetrators of

violations of the rights of women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues.

93. It has been reported that the Government of Mexico is currently in the process of working towards the development of a protection programme and mechanism for human rights defenders. However, it seems unclear whether this mechanism will recognize the special security and protection needs of women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues. While the Special Rapporteur welcomes this initiative, she hopes that the specific risks and security needs of women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues are being taken into consideration in the design and implementation of all such mechanism.

94. According to the information received, the Colombian Constitutional Court has stated that women defenders face extraordinary risks linked to both their condition of women and to their active participation in community and social movements. In this connection, the Constitutional Court has issued orders to overcome the inadequate protection of those women who work as leaders of internally displaced communities and has highlighted the gender-related risks faced by women defenders in the context of the conflict.

95. The Special Rapporteur has received information indicating that the Government of Colombia has made efforts to incorporate a gender-dimension into the protection programme for internally displaced women, which has paid special attention to those women leaders of these communities. These efforts have included consultation with this group of women defenders during the design and implementation of specific protection actions. While this is welcome, the Special Rapporteur would like to note that similar efforts would be necessary to protect other groups of women defenders in the country.

96. In other regions, a factor reported as hindering the development or implementation of State-based policies or practices for the protection of women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues is the lack of will on the part of Government authorities, including the police. In these cases, Government or police officials may themselves share the prevailing conservative and patriarchal views of the community in general towards women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues, and thus may have little or no enthusiasm to intervene effectively for their protection in spite of their obligation to do so.

2. Regional protection mechanisms

97. In the Americas, the provisional and precautionary measures granted by the Inter-American Court for Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights respectively are seen as an effective recourse by some women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues. It is reported that these measures raise the visibility of their cases and can help obtain resources for their protection. However, a number of limitations to their effective implementation have also been reported from different sources, mainly the fact the women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues often have to be protected by the same institutions or State agents who have allegedly violated their rights. Factors such as this may discourage this group of defenders from utilising such mechanisms, and must be addressed.

98. Information provided indicates that, in a number of countries, working groups on the implementation of the European Union (EU) Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders have been established, with a view to developing a local implementation strategy. Women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues at risk could have recourse to various means of support provided by different stakeholders.

3. Strategies used to keep themselves safe

99. Considering the dearth of State-based resources for the protection of women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues, these defenders often have to take measures for their security into their own hands. Responses have indicated that women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues use support networks, including family, community and other defenders, to move away from their homes or bring their children to a safe place for a while if they think necessary. It is reported that in certain countries of the region, women defenders use shelters for abused women as safe places for themselves and their families.

100. According to the information provided, these defenders in Honduras, Malaysia, Nicaragua and other countries have used various public strategies to keep themselves safe, including public denunciation; enhancing the visibility of their work through public campaigns; bringing cases before the Public Prosecutor; establishing strategic alliances with other national international organizations and actors to share relevant information; and sending cases to Inter-American Commission for Human Rights requesting precautionary measures.

101. In some cases, women human rights defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues must keep their human rights activities out of the public eye so as to mitigate the risks they face. For example, in certain countries they often declare their "social or political meetings" as meetings about childcare or similar since they are more accepted in their societies as corresponding to gender role, in order to avoid some of the pressure. In other countries, they refrain from public discussion of their activities in order to avoid drawing attention to it. Often, they use their family resources to keep themselves safe, including the escort of their family members.

102. Certain NGOs at the international, regional and national levels have developed tools and programmes such as accompaniment to defenders at risk, informal security patrols, trainings, publications and the creation of local networks for the protection of these defenders, among others, with a view to increasing their protection and their capacity to protect themselves. While such initiatives are commendable and often extremely effective, they are insufficient to replace the State's policies or programmes necessary to effectively address the security needs of this group of defenders.

103. It should be noted that the various risks and challenges outlined above to which women human rights defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues are exposed in attempting to carry out their legitimate and peaceful human rights activities cannot be conceived as of separate from the political, social, economic, environmental, and other systemic factors which produce and reproduce conflict, displacement, inequality, violence, patriarchal attitudes and practices which are at the root of these challenges. The security of such defenders is inherently linked to the security of their communities and can only be fully achieved in the context of a holistic approach which includes the deepening of democracy, the fight against impunity, the reduction of economic inequalities, and striving for social and environmental justice, among others.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

104. **The Special Rapporteur is dismayed at the extraordinary risks that women human rights defenders and those working on women's right or gender issues face due to their work. Most of these risks directly affect their physical integrity and that of their family members.**

105. Based mostly of the review of the communications sent by the mandate during the period between 2004 and 2009, women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues seem to be more at risk of being threatened, including death threats, and being killed in the Americas region than in other parts of the world. Arrest and further judicial harassment and criminalization of the work of have been more commonly reported in Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, Europe and Central Asia. Moreover, these defenders also risk being exposed to the reported torture, mistreatment and widespread use of excessive force by State agents in the context of arrests and detention. Furthermore, women defenders face a greater risk of being subject to sexual harassment, sexual violence and rape.

106. The majority of threats, death threats, physical attacks, killings, and attempted killings were attributed to unknown or unidentified individuals. In many such cases, particularly with regard to killings and attempted killings, perpetrators were reported as non-State actors, including armed groups and/or paramilitary groups, most notably in the Americas and parts of Africa.

107. The Special Rapporteur is concerned at the large number of violations which appear to be perpetrated by agents or representatives of the State, including police officers, military, Government officials and the judiciary. These violations reportedly include arrests, mistreatment, torture, criminalization, wrongful sentencing but also stigmatization, threats, death threats and killings.

108. The Special Rapporteur would like to make the following recommendations, which should be read in conjunction with her previous guidelines and recommendations regarding protection programmes for human rights defenders in general.

109. The Special Rapporteur recommends that member States:

- Publicly acknowledge the particular and significant role played by women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues in the consolidation and advancement of plural and inclusive societies as a first step to preventing or reducing the risks that they face;
- Protect women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues from violations perpetrated by State and non-State actors by acknowledging such violations and by offering effective security measures;
- Ensure that violations against women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues committed by State and non-State agents are promptly and impartially investigated and that those responsible are punished in an appropriate manner. Fighting impunity is essential for the security of this group of defenders;
- Specifically involve women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues in any consultation with human rights defenders, whether it be in the context of protection programmes or otherwise;
- Ensure that the programmes supported for the security and protection of human rights defenders integrate a gender perspective and address the specific risks and security needs of women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues;
- Promote projects to improve and further develop the documentation of cases of violations against women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues;

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- Increase material resources for the immediate protection of women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues and make sure that they can be mobilized in a flexible manner to guarantee their effective physical and psychological protection; and
 - Ensure that cases of sexual violence against defenders are attended to by personnel who are qualified from a gender perspective. The victim must be consulted during each step of process.
110. The Special Rapporteur recommends that national human rights institutions:
- Integrate a gender dimension in the planning and implementation of all programmes and other interventions related to human rights defenders, including through consultation with the relevant organizations; and
 - Support the documentation of cases on violations against women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues.
111. The Special Rapporteur recommends that regional protection mechanisms:
- Ensure that the programmes supported for the security and protection of human rights defenders integrate a gender perspective and address the specific risks and security needs of women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues; and
 - Promote projects to improve and further develop the documentation of cases of violations against women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues.
112. The Special Rapporteur recommends that national and international NGOs:
- Strengthen informal and formal networks to support women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues in case of attacks since they can be instrumental in ensuring their immediate safety when needed;
 - Promote campaigns to address the prejudices against the work and activities of women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues;
 - Continue the development and dissemination of tools and materials for the protection of women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues; and
 - Engage, where appropriate, with governmental and intergovernmental bodies concerning the design and implementation of programmes for the protection of human rights defenders, ensuring that the situation of women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues is taken into account.
-