



# AUSTRALIA



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## UNGA Third Committee

### Item 74: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

**Statement delivered on 23 October 2018**

Australia thanks the Special Rapporteur for his report.

We firmly agree that “human rights defenders play a crucial role within the United Nations human rights system”. By connecting the lived-experiences of rights holders to the obligations adopted by states, human rights defenders support accountability and transparency, highlight abuses and violations, and contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights.

Australia supports the Special Rapporteur’s reiteration that all human rights defenders are entitled to protection from discrimination on any ground – including sex, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity, disability, race, ethnicity, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality or other status.

We appreciated the Special Rapporteur’s analysis of how the notion of “human rights defender” has expanded since the Declaration was adopted in 1998, and we concur that there is a need to ensure all defenders are extended equal rights and protections – including women defenders, indigenous advocates, and defenders working on potentially controversial issues.

Australia notes with appreciation both: the *Joint Statement marking the 20th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders* adopted by the Special Rapporteur and the United Nations human rights treaty bodies”; and *The Marrakech Declaration on “Expanding the civic space and promoting and protecting human rights defenders, with a specific focus on women: The role of national human rights institutions”* adopted by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. These are both excellent examples of how the discourse on human rights defenders has evolved and been strengthened over the last twenty years.

We encourage the Special Rapporteur to continue working with the treaty bodies, National Human Rights Institutions, the other Special Procedure Mandate Holders, and UN Member States, to deepen awareness of human rights defenders’ work. Such collaboration can only bolster the global understanding and appreciation of human rights defenders’ invaluable contributions.

*299 words*