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## PRESS-RELEASE

### **At close of global conference on civic space and human rights defenders, NHRIs adopt Marrakech Declaration setting out way forward**

More than 260 NHRI representatives from around the globe met from 10 to 12 October in Marrakech, Morocco, to explore the roles and contributions NHRIs can have in expanding civic space and promoting and protecting human rights defenders, with a particular attention to women human rights defenders.

The Conference was enriched by lively discussions and debates which reflected the wide range of experience and perspectives from NHRIs, human rights defenders, representatives of UN and regional human rights mechanisms from all regions as well as partners from OHCHR and UNDP.

Participants discussed several areas such as:

- the crucial elements of an enabling environment;
- how to monitor civic space and threats to it;
- how to protect human rights defenders;
- how to specifically protect women human rights defenders;
- how to protect NHRIs who are themselves human rights defenders; and
- how to develop effective communication on human rights and promotion of positive narratives.

Building on these discussions, and NHRI lessons and practices identified, NHRIs adopted the [Marrakech Declaration](#), which sets out NHRIs' commitments and way forward.

The Declaration identifies a number of activities to guide NHRIs in strengthening their promotional and protection activities, as well as reinforcing cooperation and partnerships. Among other commitments, NHRIs resolved to:

- contribute to the establishment of national protection systems for human rights defenders, which requires an enabling environment, accessible and inclusive;
  - raise awareness and support States in the implementation of the UN Declaration of Human Rights Defenders;
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- advance positive narratives on the importance of human rights and the legitimate role of human rights defenders, in particular women human rights defenders;
- interact with human rights defenders and civil society in a regular manner and support the development and strengthening of national and regional defenders' networks;
- set-up efficient and robust early warning mechanisms and focal points within NHRIs; and
- interact with the international and regional human rights systems in support of human rights defenders, and monitor follow-up and implementation of recommendations.

The Declaration also encourages GANHRI, its regional networks and all NHRIs to collaborate in mutual capacity building and sharing of experiences and knowledge, including by the elaboration of regional action plans to follow-up on this Declaration and the establishment of a mechanism on human rights defenders within GANHRI.

“The Marrakech Declaration will guide NHRIs’ work. We look forward to working with all our partners including human rights defenders implementing the Declaration, at national, regional and global levels. ”

Participants expressed their gratitude to the CNDH for the warmth of their hospitality and the excellent organisation of the event.

The International Conference also marked the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 25th anniversary of the endorsement of the Paris Principles and the establishment of the international network of NHRIs, the 20th anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

The 14<sup>th</sup> NHRIs International Conference is scheduled to take place in 2021 hosted by an European NHRI.