

## Human Rights Defenders raised issues directly with UN special rapporteur at recent Bangkok forum

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FORUM-ASIA's Third Regional Human Rights Defenders Forum, was successfully held from 18-20 January 2009, after its postponement in December due to Thailand's political crisis. The Forum met its objectives of promoting a strong partnership between human rights defenders in Asia and the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

About 100 over participants - working on a broad section of issues in Asia - attended the three day conference which was packed with several activities relating to human rights defenders.

Mrs. Margaret Sekaggya, the UN Special Rapporteur, discussed her mandate in length and special sessions were held for her to directly hear from participants about the experiences of human rights defenders in different countries across Asia.

The Forum also included a discussion on the role of national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and the protection of human rights defenders in Asia, with the goal of identifying areas for strengthened interaction between NHRIs and the UN Special Rapporteur to better protection of the rights of human rights defenders on the ground.

After all the presentations from several speakers in the region, participants worked in sub-regional groups - Northeast Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia - to discuss the specific challenges they faced and develop action points and recommendations on how to implement the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. The Forum concluded with the adoption of the 2008 Bangkok Commitment.