



Michel FORST

EDUCATION :

- MS in public health
- Doctoral studies in Theology
- Languages (French – mother tongue, English – fluent)

MAJOR SELECTED EXPERIENCES RELEVANT TO THE POSITION:

- Special Advisor to the French National Commission on Human Rights (2016-present)
- UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders (2014-2020)
- UN Special Rapporteur on Haiti (2008-2013)
- Chair of the Coordination Committee of UN Special Procedures
- Secretary General of the French NHRI (2005-2016)
- Chief Executive Office UNESCO (Social and Human Sciences 2001-2003)
- Founding Trustee of Frontline Defenders
- Secretary General of the world summit on Human Rights Defenders (1998)
- Director General of Amnesty International France (1989-1999)

EXPERT IN HUMAN RIGHTS DIPLOMACY.

I have a thorough knowledge of the UN and regional human rights systems. As the UN Independent Expert on Haiti, my main task was to provide advisory services and political assistance to the government of Haiti and to advise the international community.

As UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, I have visited more than 60 countries at the invitation of governments or at the request of universities and CSOs. I have held numerous meetings with ministers and state institutions in the capitals or with ambassadors in Geneva and New York to discuss the situation of human rights defenders and support all initiatives aimed at strengthening their protection.

I have sent dozens of confidential communications to governments on alleged violations of the rights of human rights defenders and engaged with ambassadors or ministers in diplomatic discussions.

I have presented and discussed numerous reports before the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly, which have been sometimes used by member states to prepare resolutions and decisions.

In 2016 I presented the first major UN report about environmental defenders in which I examined the root causes of attacks perpetrated against environmental defenders and presented concrete recommendations to UN member states and a range of actors including business and investors for reversing the trend.

In my previous UN mandates, I have developed mid-term strategies and, in my experience, a drafting process built soundly on input from member states, civil society and other stakeholders, brings clarity, ownership and understanding of the vision and purpose of the plans, and is likely to lead to successful implementation.

As it is a new mechanism, I strongly believe it is important for the mandate holder to approach the mission strategically when deciding to take action to protect any person experiencing, or at imminent threat of, penalization, persecution, or harassment for seeking to exercise their rights under the Aarhus Convention.

As Special Rapporteur, I would take a similar approach and, after a large consultation with all stakeholders, I would present a vision and a strategy for the mandate and suggest how best the mandate could cooperate with the Compliance Committee and other relevant human rights bodies and organizations.

Throughout my career at the UN, my engagement with civil society organizations, I have demonstrated leadership, working closely with major international and local human rights organizations and networks of activists united in affirming international principles that advance the protection of human rights.

I am confident that I have the ability to push for improved protection of environmental defenders, based on the main provisions of the Aarhus Convention and I submit this application in the strong belief that my experience with the UN, governments and civil society organizations will help to establish a strong rapid response mechanism to alleged violations of the obligations under article 3 (8) of the Convention and to design and develop, with the support of the Secretariat, the various tools for resolving complaints and protecting environmental defenders quickly and effectively.