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**Written statement submitted to the II UN Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and Rule of
by non-governmental organisation Human Rights Cat
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Item 2: Parliaments as key actors in the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

Human Rights Cat welcomes the work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (UIP) and its Committee on Human Rights. This Committee gives both preventive and active protection to parliamentarians. As regards the preventive perspective, it gives preventive protection since MPs know that their rights, if abused or violated, can be brought to and defended by the Committee. As for the active perspective, when parliamentarians rights' are violated, it is easy to seize the Committee which will be able to start a procedure on that case where: the case will be studied, the State will be asked to provide information and, finally, the Committee will meet and issue some recommendations searching for the situation to be redressed, and will go on until a result is attained.

The role of Parliaments on the defence and protection of human rights is crucial.

Parliaments represent people; their mandate is to follow people's will shown through democratic elections. So-called regional parliaments are closer to people than state Parliaments are. Therefore, they are in a privileged position to address daily situations that affect our societies today and involve violation of human rights regarding various fields: freedom of opinion and expression, racism, discrimination, ill-treatment, right to adequate housing, to mention but a few.

But how are these regional MPs' human rights protected at the international level from abuses coming from other MPs or parties, or even from the State Parliament or Government?

How can they feel free to exercise their freedom of expression, while in the exercise of their office as parliamentarians, to parley, to talk, at the end of the day?

Why do not they have the privilege of being irresponsible as national MPs are?

The UIP does not provide protection to regional MPs in any of the senses above-mentioned. Furthermore, regional Parliaments depend somehow on the national Parliament and Government which can even take grave measures against a whole regional parliament or some of the regional MPs who have expressed themselves, in the Parliament, in a way that is contrary to the views or interests of the national institutions. Concepts of terrorism or territoriality cannot be misused as an

excuse to hinder the democratic freedoms, rights and obligations of regional parliamentarians they need to do their duty.

Many times MPs must be courageous to face the Government. We are expecting unprotected regional MPs to be heroes.

HRCat believes it is time to rethink and discuss this situation of vulnerability of regional MPs at the international level. It is time to make all necessary efforts to find a way to provide enough and effective protection and full freedom guarantees to regional MPs when fulfilling their duty.

Another issue that extremely concerns HRCat is the increase of populist discourses, hatred and racism discourses we can hear at democratic Parliaments. They seem to search and usually provoke, violent reactions in the population and the increase of radical right-wing extremist parties. We can see this happening now in many European countries and others.

For all this, HRCat would like to make the following **recommendations**:

United Nations Mechanisms concerned and, in particular, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, as well as States and Parliamentarians, should endeavour a change and start considering possibilities to grant regional parliamentarians' human rights.

National Parliaments and Governments should refrain from limiting the exercise of regional parliamentarians' rights such as freedom of opinion and expression. They should apply a human rights approach to any decision they take in relation to regional Parliaments.

The UIP should drive an initiative to work together with the civil society and regional Parliaments to find a way to resolve this irregular situation.

United Nations mechanisms should monitor carefully the increase of extreme-right, intolerant, racist and populist movements in the world.

States should provide training to MPs on human rights and to behave and use their seats in Parliament to elaborate their discourses from a human rights perspective too.