



Milestones

By **Ramya Rajagopalan**
(ramya.rajagopalan@gmail.com), Consultant,
ICSF

A landmark resolution

The United Nations (UN) has passed a landmark resolution in support of women's rights defenders, appealing to all states to publicly condemn violence against women and give activists free access to UN bodies.

African nations, the Vatican, Iran, Russia, China and conservative Muslim States had sought to weaken the resolution, which calls on all States to publicly condemn violence against women human rights defenders, amend legislation that hinders them and give activists free access to UN bodies. Finally, in order to get consensus, the Norwegian-led coalition responsible for the draft of the resolution had to delete language that condemned "all forms of violence against women".

Geir Sjoberg, the Norwegian government's lead negotiator on the resolution, was quoted as saying: "The international community has sent a clear message. It's unacceptable to criminalize, stigmatize or curtail women's human rights defenders". He added that the key aim now would be to make sure governments are held to commitments made in the text.

The campaign for women's rights defenders had received a huge boost in recent months by the likes of Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani teenager shot in the head by the Taliban for her battle for girls' education, and Denis Mukwege, the Democratic Republic of Congo doctor briefly forced into exile for his work in helping rape victims. **14**