Human Rights Council
18th Session

Agenda Item 3

Panel Discussion
"The Way forward on the Right to Development: Between Policy and Practice"

Comments made by Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement

14 September 2011

Madame President,

I have the honour to deliver those comments on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and welcome the distinguished panellists and their valuable presentations. The NAM also acknowledges the attention given by the High Commissioner and the diligent staff in her office to the right to development in commemorating the 25th anniversary of the relevant UN Declaration.

The 4th of December marks the 25th anniversary of the declaration on the right to development. The NAM views that in addition to being a cause for celebration, it has also to be a cause for reflection on what has been achieved and what is still lacking in the realisation of this comprehensive right, from the legal as well as practical aspects. Regretfully, despite the establishment of development as a universal and inalienable right 25 years ago and its reaffirmation in the VDPA, we are far from the operationalisation and realisation of this right. However, the agenda has not died away and it is now more than ever that the right to development establishes its relevance while the world community faces a confluence of waves of recurrent global crises that disproportionately affect developing countries as much as they do to populations in already vulnerable, marginalised and disadvantaged situations in developed countries. At the same time, waves of change are sweeping the Arab world with calls couched in human rights and development concerns and aspirations. As much as such changes represent hopes for the future they also constitute challenges and highlight the need for the international community to react responsibly from a shared realisation of the duty to cooperate.

The right to development at both its individual and collective levels requires international cooperation and underscores the duty of states to cooperate to create favourable conditions for development. There is no denying the fact that States have the primary responsibility for the promotion and protection of human rights, including the right to development. Further, it has to be highlighted that as much as all human rights are interdependent, we live in an interdependent globalised world where this primary responsibility of the state cannot be fully shouldered unless supported by favourable international conditions where members of the

international community take into account the impact of international economic, financial and trade rules, to name a few, on the enjoyment of the right to development of individuals and peoples of states. We have to realise that we are in need of global governance reforms, which entail democratisation, participation, transparency, accountability, and non-discrimination at the international levels and international decision making processes, as much as such conditions should prevail at the national level with a view to achieving development.

Madame President,

The NAM will tirelessly advocate time and again that the right to development is an umbrella overarching right, without the realisation of which all other human rights and fundamental freedoms could not be fully realised, and that as a declared and established right it has to be accorded the same treatment as all other rights. Without the codification of RtD into an international legally binding instrument, there would persist a protection gap that has to be filled. It is not out of rhetoric but out of reality and practice since all human rights and fundamental freedoms are universal, indivisible, interdependent, and interrelated. Looking at the component parts of RtD, we would find reflected all the other rights that should be realised for all without distinction among and within states.

Over the past three decades various processes have been launched to address development issues, and world leaders have declared their commitments in this regard. Meanwhile, while the international community drew up a list of internationally-agreed development goals, including the MDGs, and WTO embarked upon the theoretically development-focused Doha Round, which is currently undergoing last minute rescue efforts. This is in terms of policy. However, practice tells us that we are far from reaching the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, that the Doha round needs rescue, and that we face global crises and failures in international conditions of economy, trade, food, environment, and energy, just to name a few. Practice also tells us that the human rights council and the office of the high commissioner for human rights are advocating the required need to incorporate human rights considerations when addressing development challenges and to achieve the MDGs, in oblivion of the fact that the right to development, in its amalgamation, is the key or rather the bridge that crosses over from the realm of human rights to the development area and vice-versa. As such, it would be a lost opportunity not to realise this link, as we should be celebrating the 25th anniversary of the declaration on the right to development amid international conditions fraught with challenges. Hence, the way forward on achieving development goals is intertwined with the way forward to the realisation of the right to development in policy and practice.

Madame President,

Allow me to remind the Council that the NAM, during the special event on the right to development held during the ECOSOC substantive session here in Geneva in July 2011, called for launching an impact assessment exercise, taking as a reference point the UN Declaration on the Right to development, of how far the coordinated action of the United Nations system has adequately incorporated the right to development in its activities.

In closing, let me further underscore that the High Commissioner for Human Rights is mandated to promote and protect the realization of the right to development and to enhance support from relevant bodies of the United Nations system for this purpose. In this context, the NAM calls upon the High Commissioner and her office to reinvigorate and pursue the fulfillment of this mandate and establish dialogue with the relevant stakeholders in this domain, and update the council accordingly.