



*Commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of
the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development*

**ECOSOC special event on
“The right to development and global partnership for development”
12 July 2011, 4-6 PM, room XIX, Palais des Nations
Geneva, Switzerland**

Background

4 December 2011 marks the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development by the General Assembly.¹ The Declaration takes a holistic approach to development, as a comprehensive process aiming to improve the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of the resulting benefits. It declares development as a right that entitles “every human person and all peoples to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized”². In other words, declaring development as a human right empowers all peoples to claim their active participation in decisions that affect them, rather than merely being beneficiaries of charity, and to claim an equitable share of the benefits resulting from development gains. The Declaration also identifies obstacles to development and calls for an enabling environment and good governance at both national and international levels, including through development cooperation, in order to eliminate those obstacles.

The above requirements of the Declaration resonate with the responsibilities of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) which include promoting higher standards of living, full employment, and economic and social progress; identifying solutions to international economic, social and health problems; and encouraging universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Equally relevant is the mandate of the biennial Development Cooperation Forum of ECOSOC which, inter alia, promotes more effective international development cooperation as well as policy coherence and cooperation for the realization of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs.

General Assembly resolution 48/141, which established the post of High Commissioner for Human Rights, explicitly includes the mandate “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.” Through its annual resolution on the right to development, the General Assembly requests the High Commissioner to mainstream the right to development and to “undertake effectively activities aimed at strengthening the global partnership for development between Member States, development agencies and the international development, financial and trade institutions.”³ The meaningful implementation of this mandate requires support from ECOSOC which, as the principal UN organ to coordinate economic and social work of the fourteen United Nations specialized agencies, functional commissions and five regional commissions, provides the central forum for discussing international economic and social issues, and for formulating policy recommendations addressed to Member States and the United Nations system.

In its resolution 45/264, the General Assembly decided that at its coordination segment, ECOSOC would review “the coordination of activities of the specialized agencies, organs, organizations and bodies of the

¹ GA resolution 41/128 was adopted by 146 (out of the then 159) UN Member States voted in favour, one (the US) against and eight (Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Sweden and the UK) abstained.

² Article 1, the UN Declaration on the Right to Development (A/RES/41/128)

³ A/RES/65/219

United Nations system in the economic, social and related fields, in accordance with Articles 63 and 64 of the Charter”. One modality for promoting such coordination has been the promotion of an integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major UN conferences and summits. To that end, special attention has been given to enhancing inter-institutional cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and UNCTAD. In this context, it could be noted that the right to development has been reaffirmed in the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the Millennium Declaration, the 2002 Monterrey Consensus, the 2005 World Summit Outcome, the 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the 2010 MDGs Review Summit and the 2011 Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs for the decade 2011-2020. At the Millennium Summit in 2000, the international community committed “to making the right to development a reality for everyone”.

Given a high level of complementarity and synergy between the High Commissioner’s mandate on the right to development and the coordination role of ECOSOC, and on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Right to Development, a special event on “The right to development and global partnership for development” will take place during the coordination segment of the substantive session of ECOSOC in July 2011.

Objectives of the special event

Organizing a special event on the right to development and global partnership for development within the framework of the substantive ECOSOC session provides the international community with an opportunity to:

- Discuss the relationship between the right to development, as outlined in the Declaration on the Right to Development, and the objectives, programmes and activities of development partners in the UN-system;
- Facilitate dialogue with UN agencies on development as a human right;
- Share views on how system-wide coherence in policy and action, responsibility and accountability, can be achieved in the implementation of the right to development;
- Review how the promotion of the right to development and the achievement of MDG 8 can reinforce each other and how the UN system can use these synergies in the perspective of 2015 and beyond; and
- Identify initiatives and key areas for future cooperation and coordination in implementing the right to development.

Modalities of the special event

The event will last for two hours. It will be hosted by the Vice-President of ECOSOC (the Permanent Representative and Ambassador of Bangladesh) who will open and close the meeting. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navanethem Pillay, and the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Sha Zukang, will co-moderate the event. They will deliver opening and closing remarks, respectively.

H.E. Ms. Laura Dupuy Lasserre, the President of the Human Rights Council, and Professor Henry Shue, Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for International Studies and Professor Emeritus of Politics and International Relations, Oxford University, will deliver keynote speeches.

The keynote speeches will be followed by an interactive dialogue at which interested Member States, United Nations specialized agencies and high-level officials representing functional commissions and regional commissions can make statements followed by civil society representatives.
