SOUTH-SOUTH HUMAN RIGHTS FORUM

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STATEMENT BY THE UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

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Check against Delivery

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure and honour that I accepted the invitation of the People’s Republic of China to participate to this very important forum. The Government of China has consistently supported the right to development in international fora.

China has also voted in favour of the United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution that established the mandate of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to development in March 2017. The Council further appointed me in May 2017.

I would like to seize this opportunity to acknowledge the Government of China for its generous support to the mandate.

As the new United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development, my role is to advocate for the implementation of the right to development so that it can become a reality for individuals and people everywhere.

I am part of the United Nations Human Rights Council Special Procedures Mechanism. As a Special Rapporteur, I am required to monitor, advise and publicly report on the right to development worldwide. This includes preparing thematic studies presented yearly to the UN Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. These studies serve as advocacy tools to raise public awareness on issues relevant to my thematic focus but also provide guidance on international norms and standards.

Special Rapporteurs such as myself engage with Governments, international organizations, and non-state actors in order to enhance the promotion, protection and fulfilment of human rights.

As a mandate-holder, I serve in my own personal capacity and do not receive any financial compensation for my work in order to guarantee my independent status. This is crucial to the impartial performance of my function.

When establishing my mandate, the UN Human Rights Council emphasized the urgent need to make the right to development a reality for everyone. I was specifically mandated to contribute to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right to development in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, and the Paris Agreement on climate change. States also requested that I support efforts to mainstream the right to development among various United Nations bodies, development agencies, financial and trade institutions; and to submit proposals aimed at strengthening the revitalized global partnership for sustainable development from the perspective of the right to development. South-South Cooperation is of particular relevance to the latter.

Although the Declaration on the Right to Development was adopted in 1986, no one can deny that it has so far remained a statement of good intent. Since 1986, some progress was achieved in raising the profile of poverty as an issue of international concern, fostering international cooperation to tackle it, namely within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals. The latest Millennium Development Report, issued in 2015, indicated that significant progress was achieved in the field of poverty reduction. For instance, China has achieved tremendous successes in lifting hundreds of millions out of poverty which could be seen by other countries of the South as a good practice.

However, the right to development remains aspirational for a large part of the world’s population. In 2015, an approximate 800 million people still lived in extreme poverty across the globe . More than 30 years after the adoption of the Declaration, too many have been left behind and are yet to see their right to development realised.

The 2015 policy framework for sustainable development provides a new impetus for the realisation of the right to development. It is informed by the Declaration on the Right to Development, which promotes an enabling environment, both at the domestic and international levels, that is vital for the full realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Declaration on the right to development states in Article 1 that “every human person and all peoples” are entitled to the human right to development. It further stipulates that States have the sovereign and inalienable right to choose, in accordance with the will of their people, their own economic, political, social and cultural system.

The right to development is defined as the right to a particular process of development that allows the realisation of economic, social, and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights. It requires the equal enjoyment of the fruits of development in all spheres. The right to development poses equality, equity and justice as primary determinants of development, and promotes the full realisation of fundamental freedom by expanding the capabilities and choices of individuals and peoples.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The process of development has to be participatory, accountable and transparent with equity in decision-making and the enjoyment of the benefits of development. This is known as the human right based approach to development.

Article 3 of the Declaration identifies States as bearing “the primary responsibility for the creation of national and international conditions favourable to the realisation of the right to development”. This requires full respect for the principles of friendly relations and co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. These relations should be based on sovereign equality, interdependence, mutual interest and encourage the observance and realization of human rights.

The international framework supporting the implementation of the right to development has to be global in its reach. It has to provide an environment that is transparent, equitable and non-discriminatory, which promotes universal access and equity in the distribution of benefits of the development process to various regions, countries and their people.

International Cooperation includes South-South Cooperation, which has been identified as a key driver of development in the 2015 policy documents[[2]](#footnote-2). The operational principles of South-South cooperation, as defined in the outcome document of the 2009 High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, include development effectiveness; mutual accountability and transparency; coordination of various initiatives on the ground; prioritization as defined in national development plans and strategies; evidence- and results-based initiatives[[3]](#footnote-3). This could contribute to promoting the realization of the right to development if implemented according to the right based approach.

Moreover, the multi-stakeholder approach, could favor inclusiveness if due attention is paid to those who have been left behind including women and discriminated sections of societies around the globe.

South-South Cooperation has multiplied opportunities for development cooperation. For many developing countries, it offers a significant resource channel in addition to, and on different terms from traditional development cooperation. [[4]](#footnote-4) South-South Cooperation could enable developing countries to find innovative ways to bring about human development in conformity with the right to development. It holds much promise for the future, if it is implemented in the context of sovereign equality, fairness and equity, information-sharing, and equal partnerships for all and avoid historical patterns of exploitation. Most importantly, it should always be conducted according to the will and the benefit of individuals and peoples and guarantee their effective participation in decision-making processes with the ultimate aim of advancing the realisation of human rights for all including the right to development.

Humanity still has a long way to go to achieve human dignity for all and business as usual will not be sufficient to achieve progress. There is an urgent need to reinvigorate the advocacy for the effective implementation of the right to development. It is also crucial that States of the international community manifest a genuine political commitment to translating this right into reality.

 I believe that it is part of my mandate to advocate practical means of operationalising the right to development. This includes identifying and promoting good practices in implementing the right to development at local, regional and international levels. I am confident that the exchanges during this forum will provide good insights on innovative ways to promote international cooperation for the realisation of the right to development.

I wish you all very fruitful exchanges

1. See E/CN.4/2000/WG.18/CRP.1, [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [A/RES/64/222](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/64/222), annex, para. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/poverty-reduction/development\_cooperationandfinance/frequently-asked-questions--south-south-cooperation.html [↑](#footnote-ref-4)