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**THE TWELFTH SESSION
OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT
Palais des Nations, Room XVI
14-18 November 2011**

**UPDATE ON ANNIVERSARY ACTIVITIES
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14 NOVEMBER 2011

Madame Chair,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to have this opportunity to address the twelfth session of the Working Group on the Right to Development.

As requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 65/219 and by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 15/25, OHCHR in consultation with Member States and other relevant stakeholders embarked on a far-reaching programme for the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development.

Before going into more detail of the various events and activities, let me highlight briefly some of the landmark developments: Nine Human Rights Treaty Bodies issued a joint statement stressing the importance of the right to development to their work. Seventeen UN system agencies and other international organizations likewise endorsed a joint statement on the need for policy coherence in the implementation of the right to development and global partnership for development. For the first time, ECOSOC devoted a coordination segment of its substantive session to consider the right to development in relation to the global partnership for development. In New York, the High Commissioner chaired a special event on 8 November which was addressed by the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the Chairpersons of the First, Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly. They all stressed the importance of policy coherence in the implementation of the right to development and global partnership for development founded on the three pillars of the UN work: peace and security, development and human rights. OHCHR is working to ensure follow-up to these important and practical initiatives. For instance, on 28 October, the High Commissioner addressed the Chief Executive Board Fall session on human rights, including the right to development in development cooperation with the main objective to advance human rights-based policy coherence within the UN system.

As the High Commissioner has said in her opening statement today, we identified three main obstacles to the effective realization of the right to development, namely the politicization and polarization of the intergovernmental debate, the lack of civil society

constituency in support of the right to development, and inadequate mainstreaming of human rights including the right to development in the programmes of UN system organizations .

OHCHR's programme of commemoration and anniversary strategy were directed to address these issues, to raise awareness on the right to development, provide space for expert debates outside the rigid intergovernmental framework and to involve international organizations and civil society alike in the identification of obstacles and opportunities to overcome difficulties in mainstreaming the right to development and to help build vibrant civil society support for moving the agenda forward.

The cornerstone for the programme of commemoration was a communication strategy aimed at creating wider outreach and building a broader constituency with a view to increasing awareness of and support for the right to development.

OHCHR produced and distributed a booklet version of the Declaration on the Right to Development in all UN official languages a copy of which is made available in this room. We also produced information notes, posters and a short anniversary video that we screened at various events and widely circulated through social media including twitter and facebook. I would encourage all to visit our facebook page and help further disseminate our anniversary message and video. In collaboration with UNITAR, our Office is also working on an information e-platform on the right to development. And last but not least, we are working on a new fact sheet on RTD and a book containing works of some 30 international experts on the subject. These two publications will be released next year.

Madame Chair,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The inaugural event to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development was organized jointly with the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation in February 2011, in Berlin. The High Commissioner, in her keynote address linked the popular uprisings of the ARAB SPRING to the denial of the right to development. And at an expert symposium which was part of the event, the three challenges to the realization of the right to development identified by OHCHR were confirmed: the impasse in the intergovernmental debate; the need

to mainstream the right to development in the work of the United Nations system; and the need to build a broader right-to-development constituency in civil society.

Madame Chair,

I had the honour to represent OHCHR at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries held in Istanbul in May 2011. In delivering our message, I underlined that human rights, including the right to development, were central to the course of development envisaged for the least developed countries for the coming decade. We highlighted the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development as an opportunity to reinvigorate partnerships to build an enabling environment for development, inclusive of human rights principles. I also stressed the linkages between development, poverty reduction and gender equality and the contribution of women to development. We reaffirmed the commitment of OHCHR to support human rights-based development in the least developed countries. The Istanbul Programme of Action embraced a significant number of explicit human rights considerations, including the right to development. Our Office is working closely with relevant UN bodies including the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to ensure follow-up in this regard.

In her address to the fourteenth session of the Human Rights Council (31 May-18 June 2010), the High Commissioner expressed the hope that the next phase of deliberations on the right to development would continue to focus on the improvement in human well-being and the empowerment of individuals and communities to fully participate in making the important choices that affect their lives. The High Commissioner underlined the centrality of equality of opportunity and of international cooperation. At the Council's sixteenth session (28 February - 25 March 2011), the High Commissioner reiterated that the promotion and realization of the right to development remained a key dimension of OHCHR's work.

In May 2011, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights issued a statement on the importance and relevance of the right to development to its work. It resolved to continue monitoring the implementation of all the rights protected under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights bearing in mind their contribution to the full realization of the right to development.

On 29 June, OHCHR organized a briefing for the chairpersons of the United Nations treaty bodies and special procedures mandate-holders resulting in a joint statement by the chairpersons of the United Nations human rights treaty bodies. They expressed their commitment to make a concerted effort to promote a development-informed and interdependence-based reading of all human rights treaties, so as to highlight and emphasize the relevance and importance of the right to development in interpreting and applying human rights treaty provisions and in monitoring compliance with these provisions.

Madame Chair,

At the request of the OHCHR, the Economic and Social Council devoted a coordination segment of its substantive session on the right to development and global partnership for development in July 2011. The event was chaired by the High Commissioner and provided an opportunity to exchange views on how the promotion of the right to development and the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 8 can reinforce each other and how the United Nations system can use these synergies framing action for 2015 and beyond.

In addition, at the initiative of the High Commissioner, seventeen United Nations system agencies and other international organizations endorsed a statement in support of human rights-based policy coherence in the implementation of the right to development. In the statement, the agencies “resolve to contribute to building resilient and responsive institutions and promoting policy coherence in the spirit of a meaningful global partnership for development” and reaffirm their “commitment to carry this vision forward, and to making the right to development a reality for all”.

Distinguished delegates,

As requested in Human Rights Council decision 16/117, OHCHR organized a panel during the eighteenth session of the Council on the theme “The way forward in the realization of the right to development: between policy and practice”. The panel discussion focused on enhancing understanding of the contribution and potential of the Declaration on the Right to Development to development thinking, policy and practice, and provided an opportunity to reflect on how the right to development can be implemented in the context of contemporary political, social, environmental and financial challenges and contribute to shaping future work on the effective implementation of the right to development.

OHCHR also supported the organization of the 2011 Social Forum in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 16/26. This year the Social Forum focused on:

(a) The promotion and effective realization of the right to development, in the context of the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development;

(b) Measures and actions needed to make the right to development a reality for everyone at the local, national, regional and international levels, including the role and contribution of civil society and non-governmental organizations;

(c) International assistance and cooperation, as well as the promotion of an enabling environment for the realization of the right to development.

A detailed report of the High Commissioner served the basis of the discussion. The Social Forum featured some 30 panellists, including representatives of a variety of development and grassroots organizations from diverse geographical regions and with a range of professional backgrounds. The Office facilitated the participation of some 30 representatives from 13 developing countries including indigenous peoples, which enriched the discussion.

OHCHR also supported a roundtable on “The right to development: constraints and perspectives” organized on 19 October by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Office in Geneva jointly with the Non-Aligned Movement. The themes addressed included redeploying resources from disarmament to development, how to reconcile national development goals with the economic and financial restrictions imposed by financial institutions, and the recurring financial crises.

OHCHR also supported a seminar organized in Bern on 20 October 2011 with the Inter-Parliamentary Union to discuss the role of Parliament in the promotion of the right to development. The focus of this seminar was on how human rights can be promoted from a development perspective, the need to give full effect to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights for enhanced realization of the right to development and parliaments’ contribution to the promotion of the right to development. The role of parliaments in legislating, policy making, monitoring and budgeting as well as the current context of multiple crises and growing demands from civil society dominated the discussion. The need for human

rights sensitive reform of the international economic architecture was also a focus of the discussion.

The High Commissioner also chaired a special event of the General Assembly last week on 8 November 2011 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The event was entitled “The Right to Development at 25: Policy Coherence in the Global Partnership for Development” and focused on policy coherence and synergies in the agendas of the First, Second and Third Committees for the implementation of the right to development and global partnership for development. In his address, the Secretary-General underlined that there was a need to listen to people, pay attention to their situation, and free them from want and fear, through a new social contract for the 21st Century- a call he repeated at the G20 Summit in Cannes. He also said that disarmament, economic development and human rights were all crucial to development. We have made available in this room, copies of the statements of the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the President of the GA and the Chairs of the Second and Third Committees. We will share the copy of the statement of the First Committee Chair once we receive it from his Office.

Madame Chair,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We will support the organization of an anniversary event that the Non-Aligned Movement plans to organize in Geneva on 6th December. And 4th December is the date of the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Right to Development. That week as our final commemorative event we are planning to organize at the UN Headquarters in New York on 5th December an expert roundtable.

Madame Chair,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, let me assure you of the continued dedicated efforts and commitment of our Office in advancing the implementation of the right to development and our full support for You, Madame Chair, and for this Working Group.

Thank you.