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**THE OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT**

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**OPENING STATEMENT**

**BY**

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16th session

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am grateful and honoured for the confidence reposed in me as Chair of the Working Group on the Right to Development.

I assume this position with a mixture of trepidation and optimism – trepidation because of the tortured history of this Working Group; optimism because the world is changing which opens up possibilities for progress.

We can no longer think of the world in compartments or live in silos. Notions such as the first world and third world or Developed and Developing countries – have become old think – a thing of the past. We have to embrace the new realities.

Technology has broken down all such barriers of the past. We live now in a global village. There can no longer be Islands of prosperity in a Sea of poverty.

Our globalized world has an upside and a downside. Today there are rich people in poor countries and poor people in rich countries. That is because the benefits of globalization are not evenly distributed between and within States. Moreover, natural disasters, droughts, migration, climate change, stock market fluctuations, health emergencies, pandemics or even terrorism – do not recognize borders nor the rich or the poor; not the developed or the developing. We are all in this together and we all have a stake in creating a better, more peaceful and secure world. Our collective future depends on this.

It is against this back-drop that we must collectively embark on the journey towards realizing a better life for all in this global village.

This can only be possible if we shed the paradigms of the past. We need to break out of our ideological strait-jacket and take a practical, pragmatic and realistic approach to the issue of human development for all.

For me this is not a question of idealism but of survival. We either survive or sink together.

So it is high time that we move to implement the right to development as a human right and not remain divided on how this is to be achieved. Because there can be no human rights if we fail to overcome human needs. For instance, for the dispossessed or the unemployed – what good is the right to vote? At the same time, if we did not have the right to vote, how would we throw out the people who brought us to this position. For this reason, all human rights are indivisible and interdependent. We must, therefore, strive to promote all human rights – civil and political rights as well economic, social and cultural rights including the right to development.

This truism is recognized by the UN Charter and in the existing body of human rights law. It is worth recalling these strictures.

The Charter highlights the importance of international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services (Art. 25).

The International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination defines the basic principles on which the right to development is based-non-discrimination, equality and social justice.

Both the International Covenant on Human Rights: the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, recognize that “the ideal of free human beings enjoying freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his economic, social and cultural rights as well as his civil and political rights” (third prembular paragraph in both Covenants).

This is also reaffirmed in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (VDPA) that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and that we must strive for the realization of all human rights without any selectivity.

Let us also recall that the Declaration on the Right to Development, adopted nearly 30 years ago, maintains that “the right to development is an inalienable human right” and that “States have the duty to cooperate with each other in ensuring development and eliminating obstacles to development.”

Moreover, several resolutions adopted by consensus in the recent past by the Human Rights Council have a direct bearing on the right to development as they deal with fundamental aspects of development. These include resolutions on the right to food; the right to safe drinking water and sanitation; the right to adequate housing; the right to education as well as the resolutions on Extreme Poverty, Climate change, the Environment and the realization in all countries of economic, social and cultural rights.

I am also encouraged by the important development this year which is the agreement on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in New York. These goals will be adopted during the High Level plenary meeting on the sidelines of the 70th UNGA session in New York later this year. These SDGs address the very essentials of the right to development – poverty, hunger, health, education, gender equality, water and sanitation, energy, economic growth, climate change – to mention only some of these goals. The implementation of these agreed goals and targets on the ground would require concrete national measures and sustained international cooperation in all three dimensions of the SDGs; economic, social and environment.

This will provide a great boost to implement the right to development. Achieving sustainable economic development, promoting social justice and protecting the environment for the present and future generations are not purely aspirations; they are integral components of the right to development, with corresponding rights and duties.

Another important event of 2015 was the third International Conference on Financing for Development, concluded in Addis Ababa, on 16 July. It assessed the progress made in the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Declaration and its outcome. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda would shape the implementation of the SDG’s, which in turn would have a salutary impact on implementing the right to development.

Looking to the future, the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol will be held in Paris from 30 November to 11 December 2015 with a view to adopting a universal climate change agreement to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. This, too, is inextricably linked to the Right to Development.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon all States to overcome the deadlock that we confront in implementing this Right. The opportunities are there as never before, to do this.

We must bridge our positions and work in a spirit of cooperation and compromise for the effective implementation of this inalienable right.

I sincerely believe that the 30th anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development next year is an opportunity to express our determination and to overcome our differences in order to implement the fundamental principles of the declaration.

Before concluding, I want to stress my unwavering commitment to make progress towards implementing the Declaration on the Right to Development. I want to assure you that in discharging my responsibilities I shall be impartial, objective and pragmatic. For this I count on your support and cooperation. Whether I succeed or fail is immaterial. The fact that you, the international community, succeed, is the need of the hour.

I thank you.

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