

The Sixth Session of the EMRTD
Opening Statement by Ms. Nada Al- Nashif, DHC for Human Rights
31 October 2022, Geneva

Dear Experts
Distinguished Delegates,
Colleagues and Friends,

I am pleased to welcome you to the sixth session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development.

The right to development is central to the mandate of this Expert Mechanism, as it is to the mandate of our Office, which reaffirms that, it is a universal and inalienable right, a fundamental part of the rights of every human person and all peoples. As we approach our 30th anniversary as an Office, we have an opportunity to reflect on what this mandate entails against the backdrop of the fast evolving global situation.

The world is facing several crises that have dramatically affected national and international development processes. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in more than 6.5 million deaths¹ and has set back development by many years in various parts of the world. The climate change crisis has reduced agricultural productivity, putting pressure on livelihoods and threatening to considerably increase hunger and malnutrition. Compounded by the war in Ukraine which has caused major human suffering and disrupted global supply chains, increased inflation and skyrocketing fuel and food prices have now affected the global economy.

Increasing prices of fuel have been followed by protests around the world - in neighbouring France, as well as Haiti, Burkina Faso and Indonesia,² just to mention the most recent. In several countries, these protests have turned violent and in the last nine months, tens of people have reportedly lost their lives as a result.³

The overlapping crises are universal and interlinked; their impact has been felt everywhere. According to UNDP's Human Development Report of 2021-22, over 90 per cent of countries registered a decline in human development in the past years,⁴ that is nations' health, education and standard of living.

While the effects of the triple crisis are universal, recovery has been uneven, and has broadened existing development inequalities. Many of the countries that have been hit the

¹ [WHO Dashboard](#) accounting for 6'551,678 deaths reported to WHO as of 19 Oct 2022

² Protests in Paris 16 Oct 2022, Jakarta 4-8 Sep 2022, Ouagadougou and Bobo Dioulasso 9-10 Sep 2022, Haiti 12 Sep 2022 onwards.

³ "In the last nine months, more than 80 people have lost their lives due to protests over the cost of fuel. That includes individuals from Argentina, Ecuador, Guinea, Haiti, Kazakhstan, Panama, Peru, South Africa as well as Sierra Leone." <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-63185186>

⁴ UNDP, [Human Development Report 2021-22](#), 8 Sep 2022.

most in Latin America, the Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are far behind, also due to persistent climate-related disasters and stalled economic growth.

What happens in one part of the world, affects the rest. This was a major learned lesson from the pandemic, and so it is from climate change. For example, floods in Pakistan this summer have not only taken lives, caused displacement and severe economic disruption nationally but are affecting food production and supply globally. Pakistan is the world's fourth largest exporter of rice with markets in China and other countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe.⁵ Droughts in Europe reduced crop yields and affected agricultural goods' prices with a domino effect on other food prices and likely increase the region's cost-of-living.

Distinguished delegates,

There is a tendency to talk about development and human rights as two separate issues with two different agendas. However, the triple planetary crisis underscores once again, that this separation is artificial, that we have to transcend it by fully recognising and understanding that development is itself a human right.

We must recognize, first and foremost, that development cannot be realized if and when other human rights are violated, that we need to move away from the purely economic dimensions of development, rather measuring the attainment of basic needs in terms of well-being outcomes of people, in particular those most marginalised.

Development processes require comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political engagement where foundations are laid through the meaningful participation of peoples and individuals, targeting the equitable and fair distribution of all benefits for all people everywhere. This requires enabling environments based on equitable international relations underpinned by the States' duty to cooperate and to take steps, individually and collectively, to formulate national and international development policies.

We have to work *together* to identify ways for building forward better, to review the global financial architecture and the structural foundations of economic, social and political systems that lead to inequality, social exclusion and deprivation and that hinder the realization of the right to development.

Colleagues and friends,

I am aware of the role of the Expert Mechanism in building an evidence-based thematic foundation to ensure that the right to development is applied in law, policies and practices.

Its recent studies have provided valuable analysis and meaningful recommendations, including:

- i) for States to identify obstacles to development that emanate from the national and international levels;
- ii) for development cooperation partners to refrain from impairing or nullifying the right to development of recipients and,

⁵ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/articles/summer-2022-living-in-a>, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-62830771>, Pakistan | Imports and Exports | World | Rice | Value (US\$) and Value Growth, YoY (%) | 2009 - 2020 (trendeconomy.com)

- iii) for these partners to collect disaggregated data on the impacts of development interventions on racialized groups to ensure that they enjoy equal benefits with other groups and are not disproportionately disadvantaged.

These are important recommendations. I call on States and other stakeholders to strengthen cooperation with the Expert Mechanism and increasingly apply the right to development, breaking the artificial barriers that separate development and human rights.

Thank you.

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