

**THE TWELFTH SESSION
OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE RIGHT TO
DEVELOPMENT**

Palais des Nations, Room XVI

14-18 November 2011



**OPENING STATEMENT BY MS. NAVI PILLAY
UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

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.

Today, 25 years after the adoption of the Declaration on the Right to Development, the normative content of this right is beyond doubt. This right has been reaffirmed in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action; the Millennium Declaration; the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, and the MDGs Review outcome document.

These milestones of multilateralism represent the promises we have made over the years. Yet, almost three billion people still live in poverty. 20% of the world's people hold 70% of its total income. Internationally agreed development goals are being trampled underfoot in a world where global military expenditure has doubled since the adoption of the MDGs in 2000 – now reaching a record high of over 1.5 trillion dollars. Indisputably, we have not kept our promises and the message of the Declaration on the Right to Development is more urgent than ever before.

Last year, the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly called on my Office to launch a programme of commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Right to Development. We have responded to this call by embarking on a far-reaching programme, which has led to a series of landmark initiatives.

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are coming to the end of the anniversary year. Many of the discussions so far have echoed the four key messages that I emphasized at the launch of the anniversary year: development is a human right for all; the right to development belongs to everyone, without discrimination; the right to development is as relevant today as it was on the day the Declaration was adopted; and finally, we must act together in a determined and coherent manner in order to realize the right to development. The conclusions of the anniversary events call for a resolute transition from theory to action. And, they have also highlighted the many stubborn challenges that remain in the path of the meaningful realization of the right to development.

Firstly, twenty-five years later, the politicization, polarization and stubborn impasse in the intergovernmental debate on the right to development must end. It is imperative to find principled common ground through greater political consensus and more political will. I believe that the starting point for such consensus must be the Declaration itself.

Secondly, we must work to enlarge the organized constituency in support of the right to development. NGOs and civil society at large are the engine of human rights. We must hear them, include them, and support them in their work.

Thirdly, the General Assembly resolution 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 UN

system for this purpose. However this right is not expressly embedded in the mandates and programmes of these bodies, underscoring the seminal importance of human rights-based policy coherence in the global partnership for development. This requires full mainstreaming of all human rights including the right to development in the work of the UN system, most importantly in the upcoming Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review, and in the post-2015 development agenda.

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During its mandate, the expert body created by this Working Group in 2004 – the High-Level Task Force on the implementation of the right to development – completed five years of intensive work. The Working Group directed the task force work plan in an attempt to move from theoretical discussions to testing the waters of practical application of the right to development. It also aimed at bringing back the lessons and experience of these practical explorations to a nascent operational framework. As requested by this Group, my Office has assisted the Chairperson-Rapporteur and collated in two compilations the views of Member States and other stakeholders on the outcome of the Task Force mandate.

In our continued efforts to support the mandate of the Working Group, my Office took the initiative to compile the conclusions and recommendations that this Working Group has adopted by consensus since its establishment in 1998. This information is contained in the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly, a copy of which is available in this room. I do hope that this will facilitate your deliberations.

Furthermore, the anniversary events and initiatives, I believe, have nurtured the substance of the discussion with many innovative ideas, and new contributions, inputs and messages.

There is much important work ahead. Your efforts at this session will help determine whether the right to development will advance to a new era of consensus, progress, and hope, or whether it will remain hostage to regional politics and rigid positioning.

For our part, be assured of my full support and that of my Office. It is my strong conviction that this Group can build on the momentum and enthusiasm generated by the anniversary year, which has yielded an unprecedented level of support for the implementation of the right to development. This is a welcome new start.

His Excellency, Ambassador Badre of Egypt, the Coordinator of NAM, said at the joint OIC and NAM event last month that “if we fail in Geneva, we will fail everywhere”. Indeed, I believe that we cannot fail. We must find the resolve to succeed in finding the way forward to realizing the right to development.

In order to eradicate fear and want, we must find a way.

I wish you a very successful session. Thank you.