

Sustainable Development with Dignity and Justice for All
Realizing the Right to Development
for Present and Future Generations

Anniversary Event



Opening address by

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Palais des Nations, Room V

Geneva

Excellencies,

Colleagues and friends,

On behalf of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, I am pleased to open this meeting to commemorate the anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the 1986 United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development.

We have come a long way in the 28 years since the Declaration's adoption. By defining the right to development as an inalienable human right by virtue of which everyone and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be realized fully, the Declaration put forward a new and transformative vision of development, with the human person at its core. Its breadth, depth and intrinsic linkages bring together the three pillars of the United Nations - peace, development, and human rights.

Much has been achieved since the adoption of the Declaration. But many have been left behind. And we have encountered many, and often intersecting crises. The enduring effects of the global economic crisis have challenged the realization of economic and social rights in nations, both North and South. The realization of the right to development has been threatened by austerity policies that disproportionately affect the poor and the marginalized. Chronic poverty and incapacity to deliver much needed public services have allowed diseases such as Ebola to take hold. This example shows us that the adequacy of health systems is

linked closely and causally with the development duties of States, and those of the international community.

Climate change has the potential to emerge as the most pressing crisis of the twenty-first century. It too poses greater threats to the smallest and the weakest, the marginalized and the vulnerable - people living in poverty; women and children; those suffering discrimination; small farmers and fishing communities. As recognized in Rio and in Vienna, and re-affirmed at Rio+20, ‘The right to development should be fulfilled so as to meet equitably the developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations.’

This year is the International Year of Small Island Developing States, and this has given us an opportunity to reflect on the specific challenges these States face. These were discussed in September in Apia during the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States where the SAMOA Pathway was adopted (SIDs Accelerated Modalities of Action). Implementation of the Pathway, which sets out recommendations in areas which include sustained and sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth with decent work for all, sustainable tourism, climate change, sustainable energy, disaster risk reduction, food security and nutrition, sustainable transportation, sustainable consumption and production and gender equality and women’s empowerment will require us to step up efforts to uphold the right to development including through international cooperation and sustainable financing.

We are now less than a month away from 2015, a crucial year for international development. On Monday, the twentieth Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change convened in Lima and will lay

the foundation for an effective, new climate change agreement to be agreed in Paris next year, as well as put forward actions to be implemented in the short term. The outcome of the Lima meeting must contribute to preserving the human rights of all, as well as those of future generations. The Declaration on the Right to development must also underpin the Third International Conference on Financing for Development which will take place in Addis next July. The results of this Conference should provide the vital link between the theory and practice of development. The right to development requires equitable arrangements in trade, investment, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and transfer of finance and technology. Increased involvement of private actors in global partnerships for development must likewise entail their increased accountability. In this context, it is appropriate that we are meeting simultaneously with the Forum on Business and Human Rights, an event which now attracts just under 2000 participants.

At the heart of national and international development, the post-2015 development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals as currently articulated, embody the key elements and principles of the right to development. The draft goals hold out the promise of freedom from fear and from want and enshrine all human rights. The realization of the right to development will be critical in providing an enabling environment for achieving the SDGs, and guiding their practical implementation. The right to development is the essential thread which should bind the means of implementation of the new agenda and goals, and must also reinforce a global partnership for sustainable development.

Colleagues and friends,

The Declaration on the Right to Development suggests reform in global governance and removal of obstacles to development which restrict States' capacity to provide goods and services, including food, health, education, water and sanitation. Our current trade system that sometimes compromises countries' abilities to deliver on basic rights; and the global financial landscape also permits capital flight from poor to rich countries. The Human Rights Council's Independent Expert on foreign debt has also drawn attention to the impacts of futures markets and vulture funds on enjoyment by individuals of their human rights, as well as a fiscal architecture which allows for tax havens, avoidance and evasion; and an investor-state dispute settlement system which may hinder domestic regulation and sovereignty over natural resources. A human rights approach, which includes implementation of the right to development, is essential here.

The right to development calls for national and international development policies which recognize people as the central subject and beneficiary of development. There are many examples, including the Bhopal gas tragedy which occurred 30 years ago which show us that neglect of the human and environmental dimensions of development, can have long term, intergenerational impacts. Precaution, including in the design and transfer of technology, amounts to prevention and save lives. People's right to participate in decision-making must include their right to information, transparency, accountability, access to justice and remedy.

The Declaration on the Right to Development recognizes that decency and dignity are non-negotiable facets of human rights for all people, everywhere. It requires us to come together to celebrate our common humanity. I would like to

invite participants to share stories, practices and suggestions to illustrate how the right to development works in practice to define progress with freedom, justice and peace. The Declaration on the Right to Development shows us the path to sustainable development with dignity and justice for all.

Thank you.