

***IFSW* *statement* on the**

**DRAFT CONVENTION ON THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT**

IFSW supports the draft convention on the right to development highlighting its eco-social aspects and sees each concern as interrelated.

As the global professional body for social work the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) acts as an inclusive and democratic facilitator of global standards, policies and ethical principles. Each of the Federation’s 146 national associations both contribute to the formulation of these standards and are also bound by them, resulting in globally shared values, and standards that bind the profession together.  Consequently, today there are over 5 million social work practitioners that share the values of human rights, self-determination, social justice  (IFSW, 2021).

IFSW has been granted Special Consultative Status by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).  As defined by IFSW, social work is a human rights profession. The values and principles of the IFSW are in congruence with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948) and several other treaties, furthermore IFSW offers policy papers on UN Agendas such as Sustainable Development Goals.

The framework for a rights-based approach to social practice means viewing clients and communities as right holders (rather than social deviant cases or charity seekers) and focusing on human rights violations rather than social problems. This human rights approach to social work enables the profession to be the profession to guarantee, “Leaving no one behind” and is able to contribute to and bridge social and environmental justice. In an analogous way, IFSW views the new convention on the right to development as a bridging tool between human rights and the 2030 Agenda and sustainable development goals based on active participation of the people (the right holders), while holding the duty-bearers -the States and international community - accountable. Therefore, IFSW supports in principle the new convention on the right to development. It gives countries from the Global South and North a framework that should be operationalizable at a community level to be steered towards a self-determined development trajectory, within planetary biophysical boundaries. Nevertheless, IFSW would like to highlight some critical issues in the draft convention.

**Critical issues from a social work perspective:**

1. The promotion of higher standards of living in terms of economic and social progress (as mentioned in art. 13.1.b) and the free disposal of natural wealth and resources can only occur within planetary bio-physical boundaries.
2. The “right to regulate” by the state should not compromise any other fundamental rights (art. 3.3.f), especially as the present draft convention places the State and the international community as duty-bearers (and not right-holders) to respect, protect and fulfil the right for development. In this spirit, it is essential that the implementation of the principles of (as mentioned art. 3.3.b) accountability, empowerment, participation, non-discrimination, equality and equity be given more weight to counter corruption and bad governance -primary obstacles to the right to development.
3. Operation, regulation and monitoring of global trading systems and financial markets are discussed in art. 13.4. These should operate not in detriment to the well-being of people AND not in detriment to the environment. Such an imperative cannot be upheld if current relevant trade agreements, financial mechanisms and decision-making involving international economic and financial institutions are not reformed.
4. The pursuit of the development of indigenous and tribal peoples (as mentioned in art. 17) can be strengthened, if their rights to land, culture and knowledge are recognised and valorised and their participation in decision-making is provisioned for.

**Recommendations from a social work perspective:**

1. The International Federation of Social Workers recommends that governments invite social workers in the upcoming phase of implementing the convention at every level.
2. States shall pave the way for all citizens to a meaningful participation. Community centres in urban and rural areas can support people in participatory processes on a local level and effectively contribute to a more peaceful society (Art. 13.6). Social workers have the necessary skill to facilitate between communities and public office bearers and should be recognised for it. Social work should be considered as an essential service in enabling the right to development.
3. Participation has several components to be considered and shall be established with a whole-society approach and integrate the civil society, farmers and small enterprises, indigenous peoples and the various local/regional interests based on the principles of equity, equality and non-discrimination.
4. Investment and efforts in education on the right to development for people and communities and the duties of responsibilities of the state is critical. Only in full awareness and respect of reciprocal rights and responsibilities can trust between states and civil society and communities be established to collaboratively work in fulfilling the right to development. This demanding time of the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed this to great extent.
5. The Convention invites in art. 13.2.e State Parties to mobilize appropriate technical, technological, financial infrastructure and other necessary resources to fulfil obligations under the present Convention. The skill base and the infrastructure of the social work profession should be considered as a necessary resource to facilitate the fulfilment of the right to development.
6. Recognition of historical injustices including colonisation and how these have impeded the right to self-determined development trajectory has to be promoted to enable a peaceful development pathway.
7. Based on the lessons of the Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: “The Future is Now”, the right to development can’t be achieved without reforming key architectural features of global legal and economic frameworks relating production, consumption and conservation. To realise the provisions of the convention on the right to development an alignment of relevant agreements and other related conventions must occur.

Switzerland, August 19th 2021