



Social Forum 2011

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Mr. Chairperson Ambassador Getahun,
Your Excellency the President of the Human Rights Council,
Madame Chair of the Working Group on the Right to Development,
Distinguished Delegates and Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to welcome you all to the 2011 Social Forum on behalf of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Ambassador Getahun, for your nomination as the Chairperson-Rapporteur of this important Forum. I am sure that under your able guidance, this Forum will succeed in its important mandate entrusted by the Council.

I would also like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council and the Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group on the Right to Development for their presence at this event.

This year, we mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Right to Development. OHCHR has embarked on a very rich programme of commemoration in consultation with Member States and all other relevant stakeholders. As decided by the Human Rights Council, this Social Forum will focus on the role of civil society in the promotion and protection of the right to development – one of the key themes of the commemorative activities.

Allow me to draw your attention to the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights prepared as a background contribution to this Forum, and to thank all stakeholders who provided inputs to this report. Additional contributions submitted after the deadline for the report had passed were provided by Colombia, Gambia, Guyana, Ukraine, the Association for Progressive Communication, Front des Organisations Nationales Association de Lutte contre la Corruption (FONAC), International Disability and Development Consortium, Instituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice delle Salesiane di Don Bosco (IIMA), Jeunesse Horizon, Movimento Indigen Tawantinsuyo (MIT-Peru) and Movement of the Autochtones Minorities and Pygmies of Gabon. We hope that we will hear more from these stakeholders during these three days and we will ensure that their contributions are reflected in the final report.

The background report provides an introduction to the Social Forum, and contains information on the promotion and effective realization of the right to development, including in the context of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development. It also provides an overview of measures and actions needed to implement the right to development at the local, national, regional and international levels, with particular focus on the role and contribution of civil society and non-governmental organizations. In addition, the report examines the role of international cooperation in the promotion of an enabling environment for the realization of the right to development. I hope you will find the report useful and that it will contribute to a rich and fruitful debate and successful outcome for this Forum.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In response to the call from the High Commissioner for global commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as the Chairpersons of the UN Treaty Bodies have already issued important statements. Also at the initiative of our Office, several UN system agencies and other international organizations have endorsed a statement in support of policy coherence in the implementation of the right to development. These documents are available for consultation on the website of the OHCHR. We would encourage the civil society actors present here to consider a similar civil society initiative, in commemoration of this special anniversary.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 1986, the Declaration on the Right to Development was adopted by the General Assembly. But the constituent elements of the right to development are rooted in the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants of Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as well as other United Nations instruments.

The logic of the right to development, as expressed in the Declaration itself, is unassailable: Everyone has the right to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development. The Declaration sets out the particular requirements of the right to development itself, and, by extension, human rights-based development. These requirements are:

- Putting human person at the centre of development;
- Ensuring free, active and meaningful participation;
- Securing non-discrimination;
- Fairly distributing the benefits of development;

-Respecting self-determination, and sovereignty over natural resources;
and

-In a process that advances other civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights

It is useful to recall that, through the United Nations Charter, Member States undertook to "*promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom*" and "*to achieve international cooperation 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 without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.*" Furthermore Article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights calls for a social and international order in which all human rights can be realized.

Mr. Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Development has sometimes been equated with economic growth. But real development is about access to opportunities for the constant improvement of human wellbeing, about guaranteeing the right to a life in dignity and freedom – freedom from want, freedom from fear and the freedom to flourish. Indeed, development is a right, and it is vital that the language of human rights and a focus on people forms the core of discussions on development.

The right to development implies the rule of law and good governance, and eradication of corruption, at the domestic level. It applies globally including to the Millennium Development Goals, aid, trade both multilateral and bilateral, investment, debt, finance, agriculture, technology transfer, intellectual property and access to medicines, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and institutional reform.

All human rights including the right to development must be at the core of development policy and crucially, at the heart of a strengthened global partnership for development and, of global strategies to meet existing and new challenges.

Mr. Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The background report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights highlights some issues for consideration by this Forum. Of these, I would like to underscore three issues. First, the engagement of civil society is essential in ensuring that all human rights, including the right to development, are fully integrated in development programmes and policies at all levels. Secondly,

mechanisms must be in place to promote and ensure the active, free and meaningful participation of people in national and international decision-making that affects their lives. And third, the role of civil society is vital in identifying the challenges and obstacles at the local, national, regional and international levels to the realization of the right to development.

I hope that this Social Forum will once again prove to be a valuable space for the exchange of views and concerns reflecting the diversity of geographical, professional and cultural backgrounds of the participants. Such a rich diversity of participants gathered here is a chance to generate new ideas and proposals for action to address the global challenges currently facing human rights. I look forward to a constructive discussion and an action-oriented outcome of this important Forum.

Thank you for your attention.