Fifth intersessional meeting of the Human Rights Council on Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda

Overcoming multiple crises: Realising the 2030 Agenda through a human rights enhancing economy

Video Message

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Excellencies, distinguished delegates, colleagues, and friends,

In 2015, world leaders came together under one banner.

To commit to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

The Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda represented an inspiring and truly universal call to action.

But, despite early, significant achievements, progress in the implementation of the SDGs has stalled.

In fact, reversed.

Multiple crises, including a global pandemic have pushed an additional 93 million more people into extreme poverty in 2020.

Global repercussions and economic uncertainties have been further exacerbated by the war in Europe.

Food insecurity and a cost-of-living crisis is leaving many not knowing how they will survive from one day to the next.

Inequalities are skyrocketing.

Today a staggering 828 million people are currently undernourished. Up from 150 million in just three years.

The devastating consequences of the climate emergency continue unabated.

60 per cent of low-income countries and 30 per cent of emerging market economies are in or near debt distress, amidst a looming global recession.

Which only further limits the ability of States to deliver on health, education, social protection and other human rights, affecting the most disadvantaged sections of society and women and girls among them in particular.

Corruption and associated illicit financial flows continue to violate too many people’s rights to health, education, social protection, and democratic rights undermining the rule of law.

This is a human rights crisis.

But it’s not too late.

To course correct and galvanise the political will to implement the transformative change envisaged by the 2030 Agenda, for all people and all countries.

A couple of reflections:

First, we need to work together and harder to truly place human rights at the core of all dimensions of sustainable development.

By empowering people as active agents of sustainable development; by protecting social movements and grassroots organisations from pushbacks; and by prioritizing the collection of disaggregated data.

These can be real game changers.

Second, we need to infuse our economies with human rights.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the future of human rights will be decided in finance ministries.

Projections indicate that in 2023, 143 governments will cut spending, affecting 85% of the world population.

That’s 6.7 billion people who are likely to be negatively impacted by austerity measures, including cuts to the health sector, with equally worrying implications for women who are the main contributors to, in particular, the care economy.

Human rights provide useful guardrails to ensure the prioritization of the investments needed with a focus on those most marginalized.

 To steer the design of public budgets to reduce inequalities and address patterns of discrimination.

To generate economies that focus on people, human rights and the safety, health and sustainability of the planet.

And national level efforts must be accompanied by global solidarity among all actors, including international financial institutions.

International financing mechanisms to support holistic national fiscal responses need to be fully funded and operationalised to meet the SDGs.

And finally, we need an international economic and financial architecture that is fit for purpose.

The Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley, has launched the Bridgetown Initiative which is very much welcome.

One that enables – rather than limits - States to expand the fiscal space for human rights and sustainable development

Distinguished participants,

The SDG Summit next September, marking the half-way point to 2030, is a critical moment to deliver a global plan on ways to accelerate SDG implementation.

On that path, I invite you all to draw on the universal promise, impulse and energy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which turns 75 this year.

We must rise higher to rescue the 2030 Agenda – human rights – all human rights - are the lever to do so.