

*Europe and Central Asia Seminar on the contribution of development  
to the enjoyment of all human rights*

*1 September 2022 10 :00hs. - Room XXV - Palais des Nations*

*Opening Remarks by H.E. Amb. Federico Villegas  
President of Human Rights Council*

Madam Acting High Commissioner for Human Rights,

Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin, Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission  
for Europe,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honor to address you today at the launch of the regional seminar series on the  
contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights.

The concept of development and indeed its contribution to human rights has evolved over the past  
few decades, focusing more on people and with greater attention to using a human rights based  
approach. This has involved many questions around how development constitutes a human right -  
the right to development; how true development is based on human rights; and how development  
contributes to all human rights. While the latter question is the focus of this seminar series, the  
other two questions are equally important.

At the Human Rights Council, historic engagements and landmark decisions over the years have  
equipped us with tools and mechanisms that are important in our common pursuit to achieve the  
Sustainable Development Goals and to build societies where development contributes to the  
enjoyment of all human rights.

This seminar series is part of such effort. It is mandated by the resolution [47/11](#) of the Council  
entitled "the contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights", which builds upon

the Council's resolution of the same title (HRC res [41/19](#)) adopted in July 2019 and its predecessor (HRC res. [35/21](#)) in July 2017.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The seminar series also relate to other mandates of the Council about development and human rights.

Since 2006, the Council has adopted annual resolutions on the right to development, building on the text of the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development. Through these resolutions, the Council has established mechanisms, including the mandate of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group, the Special Rapporteur, the Expert Mechanism and the Biennial Panel on the right to development. These mechanisms continue to help us understand the relationship between development as a human right and other human rights.

Additionally, since 2018, the Council has adopted two resolutions on “Promotion and protection of human rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (HRC resolutions [37/24](#) and [43/19](#)). They established a series of intersessional meetings for dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The discussions in those meetings are also relevant for the discussions we will have in this seminar. For example, in my opening statement to the fourth intersessional meeting in January this year, I concluded that to achieve a truly sustainable recovery from the rippling effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, we must move from temporary measures to longer term investments anchored in a human rights perspective. We must also continue to advance gender equality and strengthen partnerships with the aim of a social contract for inclusive development and sustainability based in human rights. This call is also relevant for the discussions we will have in the seminar series.

The Council’s recent recognition of the Right to Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment in resolution [48/13](#) is an historic development, that provides further guidance to policy makers on integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development (social, economic and environmental), to contribute to and promote human well-being and the enjoyment of human rights. Such a multidimensional approach demonstrates the importance of human rights to addressing the greatest concerns of our époque.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Covid-19 in particular has devastated developmental progress and growth in vulnerable economies. The surge in violent conflicts in several parts of the world and related serious violations of human rights have further weakened economies and development opportunities.

As world leaders reiterated in the Declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, human rights, peace and security, and development are interrelated and interdependent. We, in the Human Rights Council, together with all parts of the United Nations, Member States, regional and international organizations, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations and all other stakeholders must work together. We must continue to identify challenges and gaps and share good practices and experiences to ensure that we leave no one behind in combating poverty, health and climate emergencies, conflicts and war, and all forms of inequalities and discrimination. By learning from diverse voices from around the world, these five seminars will provide insights and actionable recommendations regarding how development can most effectively contribute to the enjoyment of all human rights.

Furthermore, as the Universal Periodic Review is about to enter its 4<sup>th</sup> cycle, we have the challenge to collectively reflect on how to maximize it as a tool for development. The reports adopted at the UPR on all 193 UN member States have helped chart the global human rights roadmap for sustainable and inclusive development. As we approach this next phase, it is therefore essential we maintain the excellent track record and ensure this crucial exercise does not become routine and continues to have a positive impact for rights holders everywhere.

I am convinced that the UPR, fully integrated with the efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, can be a very efficient platform to organize the human and financial resources of a country and of the international community cooperating with that country. This could be done with the collaboration of non-governmental actors, international cooperation partners and the UN system with field presence, including, but not limited to, an enhanced use of the UPR to inform UNDP programming and interventions.

Additionally, the UPR and its detailed human rights recommendations, available on-line country by country, and thematically clustered, could also be better utilized to identify possible risk

areas and thus play an important role in terms of peace and security as well as in the broader prevention agenda.

With these thoughts in mind and as the President of the Council, I strongly urge all stakeholders to contribute, cooperate and commit to a development process which protects the rights of all. Our collective steps together are the way forward to ensure the enjoyment of all human rights, achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and leave no one behind.

I welcome your active participation in the discussions held throughout this and the four other seminars to enhance the enjoyment of all human rights through development, and I wish you all fruitful exchanges.

Thank you.