

*Seminar Series on the contribution of development
to the enjoyment of all human rights*

(Regional meetings for Arabic-speaking countries, Africa, the Americas and Asia)

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

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honor to address you today at the regional seminar on the contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights. With the launch of the seminar series in Geneva on 1 September, we now look forward to your discussion today to focus on the key development and human rights issues in Arabic-speaking countries, Africa, the Americas and Asia.

The concept of development and indeed its contribution to human rights has evolved over the past few decades. Today we clearly understand that the only sustainable development is inclusive development, which focuses on people and especially on the most vulnerable, and there is nothing better than a human rights perspective to achieve that goal. There are also many questions surrounding the right to development as a human right and how development contributes to all human rights.

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. In

October we concluded the fifty-first session of the Human Rights Council in which development and the right to development were at the forefront of many discussions, including during the Biennial Panel on the right to development.

This seminar series is part of that effort to ensure that development contributes to the enjoyment of all human rights.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The seminar series also relates 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 Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group, the Special Rapporteur and the Expert Mechanism. These tools continue to help us understand the relationship between development as a human right and other human rights. In the last session of the Council, for example, the Expert Mechanism on the right to development presented a report on racism, racial discrimination and the right to development and the Special Rapporteur on the right to development presented a report on the response and recovery plans and policies on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Other mechanisms also addressed related issues, as the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples which adopted a report on indigenous women and the development, application, preservation and transmission of scientific knowledge. The Acting High Commissioner presented reports on the right to development and on integrated approaches to the promotion

and protection of human rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national level.

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.

I would like to remind that the international community has already adopted a social contract affirming that human rights, peace and security, and development are interrelated and interdependent. We must continue to identify challenges and gaps and share good practices and experiences to ensure that this interrelation among the 3 pillars be a reality and 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.

On the other side, the Universal Periodic Review is about to enter its 4th cycle. We must 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, and in each country, a sustainable and inclusive development, with a human rights perspective. As we approach this next phase, it is therefore essential we maintain the excellent track record and ensure this crucial exercise remains vibrant 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 its field presences making an enhanced use of the UPR to inform UNDP programming and interventions.

With these thoughts in mind and as the President of the Council, I strongly encourage all stakeholders to contribute, cooperate and commit to a development process which protects the rights of all, everywhere. 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 here today to enhance the enjoyment of all human rights through development, and I wish you all fruitful exchanges.

Thank you.

(949 words)