



OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

**The contribution of development  
to the enjoyment of all Human Rights**

(Human Rights Council resolution 47/11)

**Statement by Ilze Brands  
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San José, Costa Rica

Distinguished Panelists,

Excellencies,

Colleagues and Friends,

I am delighted to open this seminar, here in San José, Costa Rica, the fourth in a series of five regional seminars on the contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights.<sup>1</sup>

In mandating this seminar series, the United Nations Human Rights Council reiterates that sustainable development and human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. I am therefore particularly pleased that H.E. Mr. Federico Villegas, President of the Human Rights Council, is joining me in opening this event (via video message) alongside Mr. Francisco Rojas Aravena, Rector of the University for Peace, *and. We are still pending confirmations of a video message of the president of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and from ECLAC.*

In the 1989 Declaration on the Right to Development, development is defined as an economic, social, cultural and political process, that requires an inclusive approach, based on participation by all and a distribution of benefits that contributes to ending poverty and reducing inequalities and discrimination in all its forms. Its emphasis on holistic human development addresses the needs of both present and future generations.

Meeting global human rights and development challenges, such as high levels of poverty, the climate emergency, the fuel and food crises, shrinking civic space, and large debts, require our collective commitment, political will and concerted action.

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<sup>1</sup> (previous ones have been in Geneva, Beirut, and Nairobi in September and November 2022)

Every region and every country have its own set of specific challenges. Over the next two days, we will discuss some of the key development challenges affecting the Americas and the Caribbean – in particular in the areas of health, urban planning and poverty.

The Latin American and Caribbean region has one of the highest levels of socioeconomic inequality in the world. Women, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, people living in poverty, people deprived of liberty, LGBTI people and migrants, among others, have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The weakness of social security and health systems, institutional fragility, the limited diversification of economies and the high number of informal workers accentuate this inequality. In addition, the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been greater in the Americas and the Caribbean compared to the rest of the world, including by greater extreme poverty.

In 2018, it was estimated that 21 per cent of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean lived in informal settlements.<sup>2</sup> Last year, 81.37 percent of the total population of the region lived in urban areas and cities.<sup>3</sup> Sustainable Development Goal 11 commits States to ensuring access for all to “adequate, safe and affordable housing” by 2030. Urban development in Latin America and the Caribbean and related housing, health, transportation, employment and security policies will have a profound impact on human rights in the region.

As the urgency to develop resilience of healthcare systems has become more evident in the wake of the pandemic, countries in the region continue to face challenges relating to inequality, universal coverage, and access to and quality of healthcare services. The

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018* (New York, 2018) p. 24; and report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2018/64, statistical annex, p. 83). Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, A/73/310/Rev.1, 19 September 2018, para. 1.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/699089/urbanization-in-latin-america-and-caribbean/>

enjoyment of the right to health continues, in many places, to be denied to indigenous peoples, migrants and refugees, Afro-descendants, women and girls, and people living in rural areas and informal settlements.<sup>4</sup>

Going forward, we must accelerate without delay the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals, which are underpinned by economic, civil, cultural, political and social rights, as well as the right to development. In his *Call to Action for Human Rights*, the United Nations Secretary-General makes the case for solutions anchored in human rights to sustain development progress. We need human rights enhancing economies that can comprehensively address the relationship between economics, development and human rights and promote dignity and rights of all and fully inclusive sustainable development.

In *Our Common Agenda*, the Secretary-General has called for a renewed social contract, adapted to the challenges of this century, based on equal rights and opportunities for all. A social contract connects government and its people and is reflected within the society to embrace a comprehensive realization of human rights. Establishing new social contracts anchored in human rights serve as the bridge to help rebuild trust between people and their governments and to enhance social cohesion.

This is true for this region as much as for all other regions. OHCHR has stepped up its engagement at the country level on economic, social and cultural rights, the SDGs and prevention in efforts to strengthen the link between human rights and development. Through the Surge initiative<sup>5</sup> we bring together human rights experts and macroeconomists to provide

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<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraciaabierta/healthcare-in-latin-america-and-caribbean-democratic-ch/>

<sup>5</sup> [05-ANNEX V Integrating ESCR SDGs Inequalities in AWCPs.pdf \(ohchr.org\)](#)

specialized and contextual research, advice and analysis so that macroeconomic policies operationalize economic and social rights.<sup>6</sup>

For example, in four territories in the south of Costa Rica - the initiative has helped promote active, free and meaningful participation of indigenous peoples, including women and youth, in defending the exercise of their rights to their lands and territories.<sup>7</sup> It is helping to strengthen communication between indigenous peoples and the State, including by supporting the judiciary adopt an institutional policy on access to justice for indigenous peoples based on international human rights standards. To Mr. González Gómez, a leader of the Boruca people in one of these territories, the initiative has contributed to a sense of indigenous peoples and communities finally being heard by UN agencies and the government and that positive changes are being made in response to their demands.

Through our regional offices for Central and South America, country offices and human rights advisors,<sup>8</sup> OHCHR promotes development that promotes and enhances human rights. For example, OHCHR has supported law clinics engaging in strategic litigation to protect the right to housing of poor families in Uruguay in urban planning.<sup>9</sup> We have also promoted a platform in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for youth involvement in development and in the response of humanitarian crises,<sup>10</sup> and worked with national stakeholders to promote

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/sdgs/seeding-change-economy-enhances-human-rights-surge-initiative>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2022/09/our-voices-are-being-heard>

<sup>8</sup> We have a South America Regional Office based in Santiago, Chile and covering Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Among its priorities is the integration of human rights in sustainable development. We also have a Regional Office for Central America and Dominican Republic based in Panama City, with a network of human rights advisors supporting UN Resident Coordinators and Country Teams in Belize, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Panama. That Office has a team of human rights advisors deployed to UN Country Teams with the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) in Barbados and in Belize, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. We partner with international and regional organizations, States, civil society organizations, businesses and other stakeholders in the region.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2020/12/law-students-uruguay-help-secure-family-safer-home>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2021/08/igniting-change-lives-young-people>

development opportunities for peoples of African descent in Canada.<sup>11</sup> UN independent experts have also provided important guidance to remove obstacles to development that contributes to the enjoyment of all human rights that are common in the region, including unsustainable debt,<sup>12</sup> structural racism,<sup>13</sup> and risks related to climate change.<sup>14</sup>

In this two-day seminar, participants working in different parts of the Americas and the Caribbean will share experiences and learn from each other how to better make development contribute effectively to the enjoyment of all human rights. It is also an opportunity to discuss how to strengthen the international cooperation necessary for development, tailor regional and local development strategies to enhance the enjoyment of human rights and promote a fair distribution of the benefits of development.

As this seminar series moves from this region to Asia Pacific where it will conclude its journey, we as OHCHR, together with other UN partners and working with international, regional, national and local stakeholders, will continue to advocate for an integrated approach to development and human rights. We all share the same universal goals – to end discrimination and marginalisation, advance human dignity, and equality, and realize the well-being and rights of everyone, everywhere.

I wish you an enriching seminar and look forward to your conclusions and recommendations.

Thank you.

*1,177 words – ca 8 min*

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<https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2018/03/one-countrys-example-promoting-inclusion-justice-and-respect-diversity>

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<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/10/un-debt-expert-urges-argentina-maximise-resources-uphold-human-rights-and>

<sup>13</sup> [A/HRC/51/37](#) and [A/HRC/41/54](#).

<sup>14</sup> [A/HRC/49/53/Add.1](#)