24th session of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Development

Opening remarks by Nada Al-Nashif, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights

15 May 2023

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Dear participants,

It is my pleasure to address you today at the 24th session of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Development. As we gather here today, we are faced with the reality of a world grappling with rising poverty, hunger, and economic inequality. Global emissions are at their highest level in human history and rising. Climate change is wreaking havoc on entire societies. And we are on a trajectory for far worse. Developing and in particular least developed countries suffer the most from the effects of an economic model, sustained by a financial system and architecture, that has failed to address these pressing issues, which are inextricably linked to the right to development.

Allow me to reiterate the call of the Secretary General for radical transformation of global financial system to tackle pressing global challenges, while achieving sustainable development.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Following a consistent decrease over a ten-year period, global hunger is once again on the rise and impacts almost 10% of the world's population. Between 2019 and 2022, the number of malnourished individuals rose by up to 150 million, a crisis primarily fuelled by conflict, greed, climate change, and the COVID-19 pandemic.[[2]](#footnote-2) According to World Food Programme, the magnitude of the ongoing global hunger and malnutrition crisis is immense, as it is anticipated that this year, 345.2 million individuals will face food insecurity – more than twice the number recorded in 2020[[3]](#footnote-3). In addition, according to the World Bank, more than 1.7 billion people still lack access to basic sanitation[[4]](#footnote-4), and 772 million people lack access to safe drinking water.[[5]](#footnote-5) Moreover, global economic inequality is staggering, with the top 1% of the world's population owning more wealth than the bottom 50%. In 2030, 574 million people — nearly 7 percent of the world’s population—will still be living on less than $2.15 a day.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The right to development is a human right. It is the right of individuals and societies to contribute to, participate in and enjoy the benefits of development fairly. It addresses these challenges by empowering marginalized communities, promoting non-discrimination and accountability, and encouraging international cooperation.

As a right, it emphasizes the importance of accountability in the pursuit of development, which can help address corruption linked to human rights violations. Its realization ensures, for example, that States and other duty bearers, including international organizations and business enterprises conduct impact assessments, and collect relevant data, within and beyond borders.

As part of our Office’s activities to advocate for and operationalize the right to development, we have strengthened partnerships for development with Member States, development agencies and other stakeholders. In 2022, we provided technical support in at least 51 development planning processes (CCA and UNSDCF), engaged in human rights-based budget analysis in 14 countries and analysed the impact of debt and debt servicing costs on social spending and national budgets.

As we are commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, OHCHR dedicated last months spotlight theme to a “human rights economy”.

A human rights economy places people and the planet at the heart of economic policies, investment decisions, consumer choices, and business models, with the goal of measurably enhancing the enjoyment of human rights for all.

In the words of article 28 of the UDHR, “everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized”. It encapsulates, as the right to development, the ultimate aspiration of the human rights movement.

International cooperation and solidarity are essential to the promotion and protection of the right to development – which builds on multilateralism and mutual trust, as it seeks to address systemic inequalities and promote sustainable development. According to OECD, developing countries face an annual financing gap of $2.5 trillion in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.[[7]](#footnote-7) International cooperation can help bridge this gap, including through initiatives such as debt relief, aid, and technology transfer.

As Member States work towards the adoption of a legally binding instrument on the right to development, as a means to accelerate its implementation and operationalization, I call upon all of you to actively and constructively engage in these negotiations. Our Office remains committed to providing full support to the Working Group and to the full realization of the right to development.

724 words – 5.8 minutes.

1. [SDG-Stimulus-to-Deliver-Agenda-2030.pdf (un.org)](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/SDG-Stimulus-to-Deliver-Agenda-2030.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.actionagainsthunger.org/the-hunger-crisis/world-hunger-facts/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.wfp.org/global-hunger-crisis#:~:text=The%20scale%20of%20the%20current,%2DCOVID%2D19%20pandemic%20levels. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/sanitation> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/drinking-water> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <https://www.oecd.org/newsroom/covid-19-crisis-threatens-sustainable-development-goals-financing.htm#:~:text=The%20projected%20USD%201.7%20trillion,the%2017%20SDGs%20by%202030>. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)