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**Statement by Mr. Saad Alfarargi
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**High-level meeting commemorating the thirty-fifth anniversary of
the Declaration on the Right to Development**

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Mister President, distinguished delegates, representatives of civil society, fellow Rapporteurs, ladies and gentlemen,

Today is the last time I address this Council in my capacity as United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to development. Six years ago, at the beginning of my mandate, I conducted a series of consultations with UN member States, stakeholders from across the globe and from multiple segments of the society. I became aware of numerous challenges that hamper the implementation of the right to development, including:

(a) **Politicization.** Despite the fact that more than 35 years have passed since the adoption of the Declaration on the Right to Development, views among States are still divided. There are disagreements on the nature of the duties of States to realize the right to development and on the relative emphasis to be placed on the national dimension of State obligations as compared to obligations of international cooperation. There are also differences of opinion among States regarding criteria for measuring progress towards implementing the right to development. These conceptual differences have often resulted in a lack of sufficient momentum in the intergovernmental debate at the relevant United Nations forums, such as the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and the Working Group on the Right to Development.

(b) **Lack of engagement.** The political divide has resulted in a low level of engagement of United Nations agencies and civil society in promoting, protecting and fulfilling the right to development. Despite the progressive evolution of the concept of the right to development and its inclusion in some international and regional instruments and national constitutions, the general level of awareness and engagement for its implementation are low. Progress in development has been uneven, particularly for people in Africa, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. In addition, the low level of awareness of the right to development among grass-roots organizations further hampers advocacy efforts.

(c) **Adverse global trends.** The implementation of the right to development faces numerous other challenges: the global financial and economic crisis, the energy and climate crisis, the increasing number of natural disasters, the increase in automation in many sectors, corruption, illicit financial flows, the privatization of public services, austerity and other measures and the ageing of the global population, including in developing countries. There is a growing demand for resources for the realization of the right to development. The rise of nationalistic tendencies and the related trend to move away from international solidarity and cooperation may further weaken international governance.

The COVID-19 pandemic that swept through the world added an additional layer of complexity to the abovementioned challenges. The pandemic not only triggered the largest global economic crisis in more than a century, but it led to a dramatic increase in inequality within and across countries. The economic impacts of

the pandemic have been especially severe in emerging economies. More than 50 per cent of households in emerging and advanced economies were not able to sustain basic consumption for more than three months in the face of income losses. The burden was worse for households and firms in emerging economies that were already indebted prior to the crisis. The disproportional impact of the pandemic on women has been well documented. Global poverty is estimated to have increased for the first time in a generation. In this context, some Governments introduced cuts in public sector expenditures and many low-income countries resorted to taking on increasing levels of debt from private lenders. Such loans have come at a high borrowing cost for developing countries.

Today, six years after my appointment, I would have liked to say that many of these challenges have been resolved. Unfortunately, that is not the case. Today's event provides us with excellent opportunities to make a stock taking exercise of the progress in the promotion and protection of the right to development. It also allows us to think how to move forward. **I would like to hear, in particular from States and other participants from the global South, what are from their point of view the most important achievements for the right to development. I would also like to hear from you what are the greatest remaining challenges and what steps are you planning to take to address these challenges.**

I would like to reiterate that we all have the collective responsibility to implement the commitments made when elaborating the 2030 Agenda most importantly, the promise to leave no one behind. The Declaration on the right to development conceptualizes development as a holistic process, requiring the input and involvement of diverse stakeholders, including States, international organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector, to achieve sustainable results. Good governance, a just and transparent rule of law and stable institutions that are transparent, responsive and accountable are necessary preconditions.

In my reports, I have highlighted that the right to development imposes duties on States and the international community, as well as on all those whose actions and/or omissions have an impact on human rights and on the environment in which these rights are to be fulfilled including the private sector. States have the primary responsibility for respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights, including for creating national and international conditions favourable to the realization of the right to development.

International cooperation is also at the centre of the principles of financing for development. In the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, it is stated that the global partnership for sustainable development is itself a vehicle for strengthening international cooperation. The role of intergovernmental dialogue and conferences in the United Nations financing for development process is to create an enabling international economic environment to achieve a sustainable development reality that leaves no one behind.

Domestically, since the right to development entitles all persons and peoples to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, a key task is to ensure inclusiveness and meaningful participation of relevant stakeholders at all levels of decision-making. Enabling disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups to actively participate in decision-making processes is essential to overcome structural inequalities and discrimination; to ensure their place as key actors in the development of countries; and to ensure the equal sharing of benefits. States, as the ultimate bearers of responsibility for reducing inequalities, must ensure that participatory approaches, reaching all concerned segments of the society, are developed and adequately financed. The cost of civil society participation should be duly budgeted into development planning processes at both policy and programmatic levels.

Ensuring that no one is left behind also requires a dedicated focus on the equal rights of women and on ensuring women's participation in decision-making. States must take action to provide genuine opportunities and strengthen capacity of women to actively and meaningfully participate in national planning, policy design, implementation and budgeting, which affect their livelihoods and wellbeing.

Climate change constitutes one of the adverse global trends that can undo decades of development. Climate change is not only an environmental or economic issue; it impacts the enjoyment of the rights to health care, education, housing, culture and food; it destroys property and eradicates livelihoods and employment opportunities in affected communities and, in some instances, in entire countries. In 2021, I issued a report in which I made recommendations geared to align climate action with the principles of the right to development. Despite progress achieved at the UN Climate Change Conference in 2022 (COP 27), there are many outstanding issues and I urge all relevant actors to urgently focus on addressing them. To provide for a just transition, and in accordance with the principles and provisions of the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement, States that have contributed disproportionately to climate change must provide adequate funding to developing countries. The establishment of a fund for Loss & Damage has been a core goal of many countries in the Global South and the agreement on establishing this fund at COP 27 is a major milestone. However, the modalities of this important facility are yet to be negotiated, a major challenge to be addressed in 2023. I also want to remind that in 2023 the Conference of the Parties will finalise the first Global Stocktake under article 14 of the Paris Agreement, where it will assess the collective progress towards achieving the Agreement's long-term goals. It is important that the Global Stocktake delivers not only a fair assessment of the current situation, but provides a road map to addressing the shortcomings.

Another issue I wanted to address today is the importance of the realisation of the right to development for youth. Among the greatest challenges facing many countries today are inadequate human capital investment and high unemployment rates among young people. If youth are provided with sufficient education, training and jobs, then the growth in their numbers could be highly beneficial for development. If instead they are unemployed or underemployed, the growing number of youth will

pose a challenge to the achievement of sustainable development, and could prove socially or politically destabilizing. The right to development requires equity within and between generations and is very much concerned with the wellbeing of younger and future generations.

Lastly, we are all aware of the process of the elaboration of the new legally binding instrument on the right to development that is ongoing in the Inter-Governmental Working Group on the right to development. I have stated on many occasions that negotiating a new international human rights instrument is a lengthy intergovernmental process, and negotiating this particular treaty will be particularly challenging. I am heartened that many states have invested time and efforts in the negotiation process, and I appeal to all of you to continue engaging, involve your capitals and invest the necessary resources, despite the remaining differences. The distinguished Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group, who is leading the drafting process, will certainly provide you with more details, insights and wisdom.

I thank you all for your kind attention.