

52nd session of the Human Rights Council
**High-level meeting commemorating the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration on
the Right to Development**

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35 years after its adoption, the Declaration on the Right to Development has renewed relevance in a world which is currently going through an important structural transformation.

Undeniably, progress has been made in the implementation of the right to development before 2018. RtD has evolved from being a new concept to being well acknowledged and now being routinely included in the United Nations resolutions, especially firmly embedded in the 2030 Agenda. However, some recent adverse global events and crises have negatively affected the realization of the right to development and also brought about structural changes for national and international economies, some of which decrease welfare for the poor and the vulnerable, and widens inequality. As a result, world economic expansion is under threat; the real wealth of the world may be shrinking rather than expanding; both economic and social well-being are more and more undermined for the most vulnerable populations; and the international community is divided on many fronts.

1. Impact of globalization and de-globalization trend on RtD

In 1986 when the declaration was adopted, the world was going through a wave of globalization which had not yet peaked at that time. The globalization process had profound impact on development. While globalisation has boosted overall welfare and living standards in many countries, the rising levels of inequality globally has highlighted that the fruit of development has not been equitably enjoyed across and within countries. There were winners and losers. The dominance of capital and technology by advanced economies was further strengthened. Developing countries felt they were deprived of the fruits of modern technology and economic and social progress and that development was unfair in the process and outcome to the rights of individuals and communities.

The adoption of the declaration was followed by deepening globalization, or as some called it-hyper globalization. As a result, RtD became a more outstanding issue as hyper-

globalization has further increased profit maximization and widened inequalities. The world was flat but the playing field was not level. Therefore, the demands of the RtD for having a participatory, inclusive and sustainable development process which benefits all, have become more opportune and louder. This also explains why RtD was more prominent in the SDGs than in the MDGs. Nevertheless, the globalization process, despite of all its shortcomings, promoted greater international cooperation, and strengthened multilateralism. The world was more integrated economically, culturally and socially.

Starting from around 2017, geopolitical tension, rising nationalism and concomitant national policies have become more prevalent and have also constituted a challenge to RtD. Multilateralism has been under assault and de-globalization trend has become more apparent. The subsequent COVID-19 pandemic and the parallel crises have weakened international solidarity and cooperation, hampered the enjoyment of right to development and also given impetus to the deglobalization trend. In the 1980s the RtD was a fight for fair and equal benefit sharing of development. With the multiple crises, the current fight is about mitigating the disproportionate suffering by developing countries during times of crises. The North-South divides on fiscal support, monetary stimulus, access to vaccines and digital technology are becoming more acute. Many developing countries have been confronted with a decline in trade, FDI and capital; increasing poverty and hunger; drastically shrunken fiscal space and an unprecedented level of public debt with 60% of low-income countries being in or at high risk of debt distress.

Rising protectionism and nationalism defy the comparative advantage theory on the ground of promoting national security. Production and investment have shifted away from locations with comparative advantage to reshore production back to home countries, disrupting existing global value chains and leading to trade and investment fragmentation.

As we are facing common global challenges like climate change, pandemic recovery, as well as the need to best utilize limited resources, globalization will continue and countries cannot revert to self-sufficient economic development model. But with the ongoing trends and structural economic transition, globalization will evolve at a much slower pace and will also be mutated to accommodate evolving national interests, geopolitical considerations and climate change. Globalization has its growth-promoting potential and the current de-globalization trend has its growth constraining effect. Growth makes it easier to reduce poverty. With deglobalization policies being put in place, growth will be slower, the creation of wealth and prosperity will also be less extensive expansive. Thus, the benefit and the fruit of development

will have less to be distributed. Past decades of fast poverty reduction may be difficult to repeat and the right to development will be materialized at a slower pace.

2. Green industrialization and its impact on RtD

The world is going through an important stage of economic transformation and transition to a sustainable and green economic development model. This is good for the global ecosystem and peoples in the world. Unfortunately, this transition has been influenced by geo-political considerations and also tinted with protectionism and nationalism. In addition, the green transition has taken place at the same time with the de-globalization trends.

For not yet industrialized developing countries, some are debating how best to introduce industrial policies to allow them to develop and catchup with developed economies. However, some advanced and long industrialized economies have started to usher in a new round of sweeping industrialization policies with massive government financial incentives to reshore production and use materials produced domestically. These policies have been advocated as green-industrialization policies, yet they have led to further protectionism and nationalism, further marginalizes the developing countries which do not have the capacity to provide substantive amount of state aid to support climate change adaptation. Some of these policies have clear and direct negative impact on the implementation of right to development in developing countries, on equity and international cooperation. The transition to green economy should benefit all countries.

3. RtD may help us to avoid errors in economic transformation

The right to development, and its emphasis on a participatory and accountable development process have been put aside by some countries. It is thus central to the success of the green transition to take right to development into consideration.

We should be thankful that we have RtD which was universally endorsed and has its core principles of equality, non-discrimination, participation, transparency and accountability at both the national and international levels. These principles should inspire nations and peoples to endeavor to hold the increasingly fragmented and divided world together. RtD covers an expansive and complex scope, guiding both development and governance at the national and international levels.

As the 35th anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development is being commemorated, the need to reinvigorate the implementation of the RtD must be emphasised. The Declaration on the Right to Development requires States to collectively create national and international conditions favourable to development. More than ever, we need to strengthen international cooperation and solidarity and emphasize international responsibility

for creating an enabling global environment and policy space to allow developing countries to continue their economic catch up with developed economies.

It is essential that the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right to development should be continued in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I hope the reinvigoration of the Right to Development-can facilitate the reorientation of the ongoing structural transformation of the world economy, put it on the right path and make it truly greener, more inclusive and allow people in developing countries to share equitably the benefit of future sustainable economic development, and leave no one behind.