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The Independent Expert on foreign debt, other international financial obligations and human rights welcomes the World Bank Group's recognition that access to energy is a human right

I welcomed the World Bank's acknowledgement that access to electricity is a human right made during the World Bank Spring Meetings on 17 April 2024 and that the World Bank will make access to this source of energy in Sub-Saharan Africa a top priority through a new World Bank commitment to provide access to electricity to 250 million people in the region by 2030.

In this regard, I wrote to the World Bank to initiate a dialogue in order to understand how the World Bank Group plans to develop and integrate a human-rights-based approach to operationalise the Bank's new institutional commitment to provide energy access to 250 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2030. I would also like to acknowledge the World Bank's response which emphasized the transformative role of sustainable energy for investments, innovation, and job creation, and highlighted the importance of partnerships in addressing development challenges, expressing a willingness to collaborate on effective solutions.

In the spirit of the Bank's commitment to partnerships outlined in the World Bank's President speech on 13 October 2023 at the World Bank's Annual Meetings in Marrakech, I urged the Bank to make full use of the United Nations Human Rights mechanisms, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as global academic and civil society expertise to develop the systems, processes and indicators necessary to bring to fruition the vision of a World Bank Group in which all its activities and programmes do not harm, but instead strengthen, the capacity of all individuals to exercise their human rights.

I believe that working collaboratively with partners on this initiative would mark an important step for the World Bank to demonstrate clear leadership among multilateral development banks and to ensure that it aligns its approaches with the United Nations system and with States' international obligations, including human rights.

I really hope that the World Bank can ensure that the Evolution Roadmap process is truly a developmental evolution, enabling the Bank to effectively meet the crisis of development through the adoption of a human rights-based approach that effectively contributes to the institution's new mission and vision. In this respect, the Bank's plan for achieving this new institutional energy access goal will be an important signal.

Pursuing the path outlined above would also allow the World Bank to begin to respond to calls from civil society organisations and experts in response to last year's public consultation process on the World Bank's Evolution Roadmap, which called for the World Bank to "work consultatively – with grassroots communities who are affected by Bank activities, and their civil society allies – to develop and adopt a Human Rights policy," and ensure adequate funds for its implementation.

I reiterated that in this consultation, it would be important to include the following elements:

- Recognition of the Bank's responsibilities under international human rights law and the UN system, as well as the importance of human rights to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), especially SDG16.
- Commitments to a zero-tolerance policy towards reprisals.
- Mandatory Human Rights Due Diligence that includes *ex-ante* assessments of the human rights impacts of loans and policy recommendations on human rights while taking into account contextual factors related to closing civic space in countries where the World Bank Group operates.
- Development of human rights indicators and 'hybrid' indicators that track states' ability to meet basic human rights, in addition to considering extreme poverty levels.
- A human rights-based accountability and remedy framework, with adequate funds and systems to provide remedy for past evidence-based harms that Bank-supported activities have contributed to in developing countries.

I also reiterated my full support in pushing this agenda forward at the World Bank.

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