**23rd session of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Development**

**Opening remarks by Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

**16 May 2022**

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Dear participants,

I am pleased to welcome all of us to the twenty-third session of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Development.

The right to development is more important now than ever.

The intersecting challenges of rising inequalities, divergent economic recoveries from COVID-19, armed conflicts, and the climate crisis have put into jeopardy significant gains we have made over the past decades.

And people who have been disempowered and whose voices have been historically silenced are being pushed further and further behind.

As United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres recently observed: “in many ways, we are at ground zero for the world we need to build – a world of respect for international law, the UN Charter and the power of multilateralism, a world that protects civilians, a world that advances human rights, a world where leaders live up to the values that they have promised to uphold. International cooperation is at the core of the right to development”.[[1]](#footnote-1)

In line with the mandate entrusted to me and my Office by the General Assembly, we have increased our work on the right to development.

My office supports the mechanisms created by the Council on this right, including this Working Group, the Special Rapporteur and the Expert Mechanism.

The right to development is also important to the work of all other human rights mechanisms, including the Universal Periodic Review, the Treaty Bodies and other Special Procedures.

My Office continues its efforts to integrate the right to development in its technical assistance work and human rights mainstreaming efforts globally and regionally.

The General Assembly has repeatedly called upon the Human Rights Council to ensure the right to development is on par with all other human rights and fundamental freedoms.

This working group session will deliberate on the proposed draft convention on the right to development and you have in front of you the first revised draft, prepared by your Chair-Rapporteur, Ambassador Zamir Akram, with the support of the drafting group of experts, and my Office.

The adoption of a convention on the right to development will put an end to the debate about the legal status of this human right. It will also clarify the scope and content of the right and its corresponding obligations, defining the right holders and duty bearers.

On various occasions, I have encouraged member States to actively participate in the consideration and negotiation of the draft convention on the right to development, if only to detail their concerns or points of contention. This would allow the Chair-Rapporteur and the drafting group of experts supporting him to consider these points and possibly accommodate or address some of them.

As the Working Group considers the revised draft, I reiterate my appeal to all Member States to actively engage in the negotiation.

Dear participants,

In its appeal for better governance of global economic frameworks, the right to development is at the core of the calls I have made for a human rights- enhancing economy. An economy that not only prioritises inclusive, sustainable economic growth, but that has people and their human rights as its focus.

Now, more than ever, we need transparency, accountability and a broad space for social dialogue, scrutiny and participation.

I encourage you to take up this opportunity, on behalf of the people and communities you represent, to engage in this important effort of international law making.

I wish you all success in your efforts.

I thank you for your attention.

1. [Secretary-General's opening remarks at press conference with President of Ukraine | United Nations Secretary-General](https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2022-04-28/opening-remarks-press-conference-president-of-ukraine) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)