

## **The Third Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development**

**Tuesday, 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2021, 11:00am EST**

**Opening statement by  
Ms. Klentiana Mahmutaj  
Chair of the EMRTD**

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear colleagues,

It is a great honour for me to chair this third session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development and preside over our inter-sessional activities. I would like to express my appreciation to my colleague and predecessor, Mr. Bonny Ibhawoh, for his excellent leadership as the first chair of the mechanism.

This Expert Mechanism has been established by the Human Rights Council in September 2019, and became operational with May 2020, following the selection and appointment process.

Our mandate is to provide the Human Rights Council with thematic expertise on the right to development in searching for, identifying and sharing best practices with Member States and promotes the implementation of the right to development worldwide.

For that, we hold two sessions per year and submit one annual report and one to two thematic studies to the Human Rights Council. In addition, we adopt statements on topical issues, with a view to promoting the implementation of the right to development.

We work in close collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development, as well as other related and interested mandate holders, and are available to support the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Development, which will soon start its negotiations of a draft legally binding instrument on the right to development.

Two of our members are also members of the drafting group, which was convened by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights at the request of the Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group.

Since our establishment, we submitted one annual report to the Council, which endorsed all six recommendations we made to it.

Consequently, we are now mandated:

- to participate in the annual sessions of the Intergovernmental Working Group;
- to submit one to two thematic studies to the Human Rights Council per year;
- to coordinate our work with the work of the Special Rapporteur and the Intergovernmental Working Group;

- to engage with other human rights mechanisms, such as the special procedure mechanisms, the universal periodic review mechanism, the human rights treaty bodies and regional human rights mechanisms, and to make recommendations on how those mechanisms could integrate the right to development into their work;
- to report to the General Assembly annually; and
- to undertake country visits and visits to relevant international organizations and participate in relevant United Nations conferences, regional and other international meetings with a view to promoting the implementation of the right to development worldwide.

In fulfilment of our mandate, we have developed a work-programme for the first five thematic studies, which we plan to submit to the Council over the coming years of the first term of the mechanism, situated within two overarching themes, namely to reinvigorate and mainstream the right to development and to empower civil society and grass-root organisations to use the right to development in their work.

The five thematic studies we have selected are:

1. Operationalizing the right to development in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on the targets incorporated as means of implementation.
2. Racism, racial discrimination and the right to development.
3. Inequalities and the right to development.
4. The Right to Development in International Investment Law.
5. The Duty to Cooperate and Non-State Actors.

At this session we will consider the first study and a synopsis of the second one, with a view to adopting the first one *ad referendum*, for submission, together with our second annual report to the Human Rights Council at its September session this year.

In our outreach, we have so far initiated or joined two press releases, one on the occasion of the 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary of United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development (issued on 4 December 2020) and the other one specifically on COVID-19 and vaccine nationalism, where we urged WTO members to cooperate on TRIPS waivers and vaccines to protect global public health (issued on 1 March 2021).

So far, we have not had the opportunity to undertake country or institution visits, given the prevailing circumstances. Neither have we been able to meet in person, for the time being.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We live in challenging times. The Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences has only compounded the inequality pandemic, to use the expression of the Secretary-General, and has added, as we have just heard from Craig Mokhiber, to the existing crises of climate, environment and biodiversity.

These issues clearly show the interconnectedness of our world. No country can address these challenges alone. They also bring once more to light the shortcomings of the current system of global governance. The Secretary-General of the United Nations Organization, Antonio Guterres outlined late January ten priorities for 2021. Among those, the need to reinforce and re-imagine governance of critical global commons. He reiterated his call for a New Global Deal among countries to ensure that power, benefits and opportunities are shared more broadly and fairly. Strengthening global governance to deliver global public goods is possible.

This, and the other priorities he outlined, speak clearly to the heart of the right to development, to international cooperation and solidarity, and I am confident that our work will make a meaningful contribution towards achieving these priorities and the sustainable development goals.

I thank you for your attention and the trust you have placed in me to preside over this session.

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