

## Contributions to the SDG Summit and the Summit of the Future

Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development's [Annual Report 2023 - A/HRC/54/41](#)

### Measuring progress beyond Gross Domestic Product

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The need to move beyond GDP as a measure of development has emerged from the understanding that relying on GDP for such measurement results in negative externalities and blind spots and inadequately addresses current challenges. Development measures based on GDP alone reward pollution, waste, and inequalities. One of the most severe adverse consequences of economic growth has been extreme environmental degradation and biodiversity loss. Although long-term economic growth and well-being are threatened by these outcomes, the consumption of natural resources in the short term increases GDP. In response, both Our Common Agenda and target 17.19 of the Sustainable Development Goals call for the development of measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement GDP and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries. The Expert Mechanism welcomes the work of the High-level Panel on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index for Small Island Developing States in this regard.

In the context of the right to development, development is undoubtedly understood as a multidimensional concept, reflecting all dimensions of human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political, social, and now, also environmental. Staunch support can therefore be found in the right to development for a system of measurement of development that includes indicators referring to all of those dimensions.

This is not to say that GDP has become irrelevant. GDP remains important as an indicator of the resource base of a State and, thus, as an indicator of the resources available for the realization of the right to development and of all other human rights. Countries with low resource availability face serious obstacles to the realization of the right to development.

As a complement to the efforts of these countries, international cooperation is essential to provide them with appropriate means and facilities to foster their sustainable development.

The duty to cooperate among States implies a duty to assist and to seek assistance as a means of implementing the right to development. A measurement system of development should ideally include not only resources generated domestically but also enable monitoring of the extent to which a State provided or received external assistance.

The right to development is a right held by individuals and peoples, including Indigenous Peoples. As a human right, development is self-determined by the rights-holders. They are entitled to the realization of their development by the duty bearers. Therefore, although development is always understood as multidimensional, its precise content is dependent upon the rights holders and may vary across territories and even within a single State. A universal measurement system should therefore allow space for localization, enabling rights holders to pursue their own development path.

The right to development is of particular relevance for the protection of rights holders that have not been accommodated by mainstream development policies at either the domestic or the international level. It is thus essential for the implementation of the right to development for there to be access to data on societal groups that are currently less able to participate in the fair distribution of the benefits resulting from



development, as stated in the Declaration on the Right to Development. Only then can policy and legal measures at the international and domestic levels be designed to effectively address the obstacles that prevent the realization of the right to development.

The establishment of a multidimensional system of measurement of development does not settle the question of how that system would be used. GDP is used as a criterium for concessional financing, development cooperation and technology transfer. The right to development is a common concern of humanity and should be realized through the common but differentiated efforts of all countries. The elaboration of a new measurement system for development should therefore be accompanied by measures that ensure that the system will be used in such a way as to contribute to an enabling international environment for the realization of the right to development.

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