

**The Seventh Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development**  
**Opening remarks by the Chair, Mr. Bonny Ibhawoh**  
3 April 2023, New York

Assistant Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Colleagues and friends,

As we gather here to discuss the contribution that the Expert Mechanism can make in realizing the global agenda on development, it is important to reflect on the provisions put forward by the right to development framework.

In her statement, Ms. Brands Kehris reminded us that the UN Secretary General included the right to development as part of his priorities for 2023. To better understand this right, we should look at the Declaration on the Right to Development.

The Declaration clearly advances the codification of development as a people-centred concept. It provides a normative framework that positions the human person as the central subject, participant, and beneficiary of development. This is a crucial step towards ensuring that development is not only economically driven but also socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable and grounded in human rights.

The Declaration also provides for the “active, free and meaningful participation” of people in development. We must engage with communities, listen to their voices and priorities, and empower them to take an active role in shaping their own development.

At a time when the world faces unprecedented challenges, when existing economic inequalities and social inequities have intensified by the pandemic and other crises, we must work to realise the equality of opportunity provision of the Declaration and fulfil our promise to build back better and leave no one behind.

The provisions for self-determination, which were enunciated in the era of decolonization remain relevant today. We recognize the struggles by indigenous peoples and marginalized minority communities to gain sovereignty over natural resources, which is a constituent element of the right to development.

The Expert Mechanism reiterates the provision in the Declaration which recognizes that the implementation of this right requires the formulation of national and international policies that prioritize the well-being and dignity of all individuals, and take into account the diverse needs and aspirations of communities.

As you know, the ongoing drafting process of the Convention on the Right to Development codifies in detail the provisions of the Declaration, taking into account present conditions. In May 2021, the Expert Mechanism issued “The essential elements of a legally binding instrument on the

right to development,” which reiterated the need for a Convention to better protect and promote this right.

Excellencies,

Over the last three years, the Expert Mechanism has conducted thematic studies aimed at facilitating the operationalization of the Right to Development. These include two completed studies on “Racism, racial discrimination and the right to development,” “Operationalizing the right to development in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals”, and three ongoing studies that will be discussed at this session. These studies reflect our ongoing commitment to generating comprehensive and actionable recommendations to make the right to development a reality.

As member States and development actors, including UN agencies and civil society organizations gear up for the review of the progress under the 2030 Agenda and to chart the way forward, the Expert Mechanism would like to offer our contribution from the right to development perspective. The right to development can support the achievement of concrete national, regional, and international aspirations. As the Assistant Secretary-General recalls, human rights, including the right to development, underpins sustainable development.

At this session, we will be holding dialogues with a wide range of representatives on five key themes. We are at a critical junction for actions and welcome open and frank discussion.

In a similar spirit, as we approach the conclusion of the Expert Mechanism’s first three-year tenure, we would like to recognize this significant step and reflect on the lessons we have learned as well as the future directions we will take. This is a crucial moment to acknowledge the progress made, and more importantly, to identify areas that require more attention and improvement moving forward.

I look forward to our collaboration toward these goals.

Thank you.

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