

***The interrelationship between the Right to Development  
and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights***

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The Right to Development is the basis for ensuring that economic, social, and political stability and security are achieved and maintained in developing countries, and along with these the full and effective enjoyment of human rights for all.

It is fitting to recall some of the important elements of this right to development. It is human and people centered. It is a human right, where every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy development in which all rights and freedoms can be fully realized. The human person is the central subject of development and should be the active participant and beneficiary of development.

Since 1986, the world has seen shifts of historical significance as some developing countries experienced rapid and systemic declines in poverty and moved forward in achieving their right to development, primarily through their strategic use of national policy space in the context of changing global economic and political conditions. At the same time, however, the world is now amid several trends that have important long-lasting effects. These include climate change, biodiversity loss, rapid technological advances alongside a deepening technological divide, a continuing development gap between rich and poor and developed and developing countries, increasing geopolitical and geoeconomic tensions that threaten multilateral cooperation. Some are on the verge of reaching a tipping point, where a long-term trend produces critical and sometimes irreversible events.

The right to development is defined by the Declaration as “an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully developed.” It is, therefore both an individual and a collective human right. As such, it includes:

- the creation of favourable conditions for the enjoyment of other civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights
- people’s participation in development processes
- full sovereignty over natural resources
- self-determination
- equality of opportunity for all

It gives responsibility to each State to get its act together to take measures to get its people’s right to development fulfilled. But it also places great importance on the international arena, giving a

responsibility to all countries to cooperate internationally and especially to assist the developing countries. It recognizes that international relations and rules have important roles. And it implicitly recognizes that there are imbalances and inequities in the existing international order that hinder countries from implementing the right to development.

To achieve the right to development in the context of the concurrent achievement of other human rights, including civil and political rights, cooperative action in the international arena is highly important, giving to all countries the duty to cooperate internationally and especially to assist the developing countries. Thus, international relations and rules have important roles to play, while recognizing that there are imbalances and inequities in the existing international order that hinder countries from implementing the right to development.

The interrelationship between civil and political rights and the right to development is therefore multifaceted, reflecting the complex dynamics between individual liberties and collective progress towards achievement of the right to development. These elements include:

- **Mutual Reinforcement:** Civil and political rights, such as freedom of speech, assembly, and participation in governance, help foster a social environment conducive to development by enabling social and political dialogue on national development priorities and policies and enhancing socio-political accountability to ensure that development policies and programs are implemented effectively and that their benefits are equitably distributed, thereby laying the foundation for sustainable development outcomes. Conversely, development, which encompasses economic, social, and cultural progress, can enhance the realization of civil and political rights by improving access to education, healthcare, and socioeconomic opportunities. Development processes often catalyze cultural and social transformation, challenging discriminatory norms and practices that undermine civil and political rights, promote a culture of tolerance, respect for diversity, and equality, and hence creating an enabling environment for the protection and promotion of civil and political rights.
- **Inclusivity:** The right to development emphasizes the importance of ensuring that development efforts benefit all members of society, particularly marginalized and vulnerable groups. This inclusivity mirrors the principle of non-discrimination inherent in civil and political rights, which seek to protect individuals from unjust treatment based on characteristics such as race, gender, or religion. Development efforts should prioritize the fulfillment of basic human needs, such as access to education, healthcare, housing, and livelihood opportunities, which are essential for the exercise of civil and political rights.
- **Empowerment:** Both sets of rights contribute to empowering individuals and communities. Civil and political rights empower people to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives, contributing their perspectives, skills, and knowledge to decision-making and implementation efforts while the right to development aims to empower individuals by enabling them to actively participate in and benefit from development processes. The right to development aims to ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to actively participate in and benefit from development processes. By addressing underlying socio-economic inequalities and providing access to essential resources such as education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, development initiatives empower individuals to exercise their civil and political rights more effectively. Empowered individuals are better equipped to engage in

civic activities, advocate for their rights, and participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

- **Balancing Individual and Collective Rights:** The interplay between civil and political rights and the right to development sometimes involves balancing individual freedoms with collective interests. For example, certain development projects may entail restrictions on individual property rights or freedom of movement in the interest of broader societal advancement. Striking a balance between these competing interests requires careful consideration of human rights principles.
- **Legal Frameworks and International Obligations:** International human rights instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as instruments specifically focused on the right to development, provide a legal framework for promoting and protecting these rights. States have obligations to respect, protect, and fulfill both sets of rights, and they should integrate these obligations into their policies and programs. The right to development is also embedded and recognized in other treaties, including for example the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement.
- **Policy Coherence and Integration:** The effective promotion of the interrelationship between civil and political rights and the right to development requires policy integration across various sectors, including governance, education, healthcare, and economic development. Policies should be designed and implemented in a coherent manner that advances both individual freedoms and collective well-being and recognizes the interconnectedness of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. Integrated approaches that address multiple dimensions of development simultaneously are more likely to yield comprehensive and lasting results.
- **Partnerships and Cooperation:** Partnerships and international cooperation are essential in supporting developing countries' efforts to promote both civil and political rights and the right to development. Collaboration between governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, and international actors can leverage resources, expertise, and best practices to advance sustainable development goals.

To conclude, overall, recognizing and promoting the interdependence between civil and political rights and the right to development is essential for fostering sustainable, inclusive, and rights-based approaches to social progress and human dignity.