Organization for Defending Victims of Violence



The 12th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development
Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda
Implementation of the Mandate and Programme of Work –
Focused Thematic Discussions and Interactive Dialogues
Palais des Nations, Room XVI, Geneva

The role of civil society organizations in realizing the right to development at the grassroots level

Wednesday 29 October 2025, 10:00 to 12:00

Thank you for giving me and my organization the opportunity to speak in the 12th Session of the EMRTD. We are working in Iran and one of our main goals inside the country has been improvement of the living situation of Afghan refugees.

On the strategies employed by our CSO to invoke the protection of the right to development of individuals and peoples we have been focused on the SDGs especially goals number 3, 4 and five, rather than the right to development as a whole.

We have been running joint programs with UNHCR and international NGOs such as the NRC (Norwegian Council for Refugees). In line with the SDG goal 3, improvement of health and wellbeing and goal 4, inclusive education, we have been offering individual counselling services to hundreds of Afghans to support them address personal and community challenges. We have also been offering courses on life skills leaning to empower the members of the community to enhance their mental health. In line with the Goal 4, we have been running GBV (gender based violence) programs, inside the refugee communities, mainly focusing on protection of women and girls against domestic or community violence.

That is our activities have been focused on the attainment of SDGs rather than advocacy for enhancement of the right to development as a whole.

On the challenges we face in our work, as we have been discussing in the Council for the past years, I would like to one more time emphasize that economic sanctions or unilateral coercive measures create **serious and continuous structural discrimination** against the people living and the NGOs working in sanctioned countries. Sanctions nullify and revers the attempts toward attainment of all SDGs especially eradication of poverty and hunger. Secondary sanctions and over compliance of business, banks and financial institutions, create huge obstacles on the pathway toward development for all sanctioned countries.

For us, another source of serious concern is the way sanctions disrupt our international cooperation toward enhancement of development goals. Because of sanctions, we find it difficult and sometimes impossible to cooperate with the UN mechanisms, international institutions and NGOs.

Finally, many recommendations offered in the thematic studies of the EMRTD are not applicable in sectioned countries, we would like to ask the Mechanism to offer recommendations which are inclusive enough to apply to sanctioned environments.