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

How to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Right to Development: reflections and proposals

Monday, 27 October 2025, 16:30 – 18:00

Concept Note
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Introduction

Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1986, the Declaration on the Right to Development (RTD) marked a historic commitment to placing human beings at the center of development and to ensuring that development is an inalienable human right. In 2026, the international community will commemorate the 40th anniversary of this landmark Declaration.

Over four decades, the RTD has guided discussions on international cooperation, solidarity, sustainable development, and human rights. However, its full implementation remains incomplete, amid persistent and deepening inequalities within and among countries, mounting global crises, and major setbacks in development cooperation. This underscores the urgent need to renew political will and increase efforts to translate the RTD into concrete action.

Through its resolution on the right to development adopted at its seventy-ninth session (A/RES/79/170), the General Assembly has decided to convene a one-day high-level segment of the General Assembly, in the margins of the general debate of the Assembly at its eighty-first session, in order to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development.

The 40th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the RTD provides a unique opportunity for reflection and recommitment. It is a moment for Member States, UN entities, national human rights institutions (NHRIs), civil society, and the private sector to consider how to mark this milestone in ways that are meaningful, action-oriented, and inclusive.

Purpose

1. Reflect on the achievements and challenges of the past 40 years in promoting and realizing the RTD.

2. Generate actionable ideas and proposals on how the international community can commemorate the 40th anniversary in 2026 in a way that strengthens the implementation of the Declaration.

3. Encourage commitments and pledges from different stakeholders to advance the RTD in their respective areas of work.

4. Collect recommendations addressed to various actors — including Member States, UN agencies, civil society, NHRIs, and the private sector — on how to meaningfully commemorate the anniversary and translate it into concrete actions.

5. Promote inclusive participation to ensure that the voices of marginalized groups and communities are meaningfully heard and reflected throughout the anniversary activities and follow-up actions.

Format

The panel will start with introductory remarks by the Chair, who will outline the objectives of the session, explain the format and moderate the session. Four members of the EMRTD will then deliver short presentations, each focusing on a distinct aspect of the Right to Development. In their interventions, each expert will reflect on their theme and conclude with two concrete pledges or suggestions addressed to any relevant stakeholder — including Member States, UN entities, NGOs, NHRIs, the private sector, and the EMRTD itself.

Following the presentations, the floor will be opened for an interactive dialogue where stakeholders can share ideas, recommendations, and voluntary pledges for commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Declaration and advancing its implementation. Pledges could include hosting events, providing resources, supporting capacity-building initiatives, or integrating RTD principles into policies and programs — during the anniversary year and beyond.

At the conclusion, the Chair will summarize the key pledges, proposals and recommendations, highlighting collective outcomes and next steps for follow-up, which will be reflected in the conclusions of the 12th Session of the EMRTD and made available on the Expert Mechanism's webpage.

Guiding Questions

1. How can the 40th anniversary be leveraged to renew global political commitment to the RTD?

2. What types of commemorative activities — at local, national, regional, and international levels — would be most meaningful and impactful?

3. How can stakeholders ensure that the anniversary leads to tangible progress in RTD implementation?

4. What role should Member States, UN entities, civil society, NHRIs, and the private sector play in this process?

5. How can the anniversary be used to promote inclusive participation, ensuring the voices of marginalized groups and communities are heard?

6. What pledges or commitments can be made today to lay the foundation for action in 2026?

Expected Outcomes

1. A list of concrete suggestions and recommendations on the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the RTD Declaration, compiled by the EMRTD Secretariat and shared publicly.

2. Stakeholder pledges to support anniversary initiatives and longer-term RTD implementation efforts.

3. Strengthened collaboration between Member States, UN entities, civil society/NGOs, NHRIs, and other stakeholders, building momentum ahead of the 2026 anniversary year.

4. The EMRTD and its members will review and build on the outcomes of the session, integrating them into their work plan for 2026, and provide follow-up support to stakeholders in preparing for and implementing anniversary initiatives.

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