SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL STATEMENT

General Debate – Twelfth Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development (EMRTD)

ITEM 3

Monday, 27 October 2025

Room XVI, Palais des Nations, Geneva

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Thank you, Mr. President,

South Africa aligns itself with the statements delivered by the African Group and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). We extend our appreciation to you, Mr. President, and to the Secretariat for convening this important session.

Mr. President,

South Africa reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the promotion and protection of all human rights, including the right to development, which stands as a universal, inalienable, and fundamental human right. We underscore that the realization of the right to development requires addressing both national and global structural barriers that perpetuate inequality and hinder inclusive progress.

In this regard, we echo the African Group's call for comprehensive reform of the international financial architecture. Urgent measures are needed to ensure debt relief, the establishment of a just and inclusive global tax regime, and decisive action to curb and repatriate illicit financial flows. These steps are essential for developing countries to mobilize the domestic resources necessary for investment in human capital, infrastructure, and sustainable livelihoods.

We further stress that developed countries must honour their commitments on climate finance. Fulfilling these pledges is not an act of charity, but one of climate justice and international responsibility. Sustainable development will remain incomplete until all nations have equitable access to the means of implementation.

Mr. President,

South Africa reiterates the call for the early finalization and adoption of a legally binding instrument on the right to development. Such an instrument will provide the normative clarity and accountability required to translate political commitments into meaningful action, ensuring that no one and no country is left behind.

We must also not neglect the mutually reinforcing relationship between gender equality and the right to development. For South Africa, this nexus is foundational. Our Constitution enshrines gender equality and human dignity as core values underpinning social justice. Yet, we remain deeply concerned that patriarchal norms, structural inequalities, and limited representation of women in decision-making continue to obstruct inclusive development, particularly across the Global South.

We therefore join the call for intersectional approaches, gender-responsive budgeting, and the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women at all levels of governance. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remain a vital blueprint for achieving substantive equality. We must move beyond rhetoric to concrete implementation because when women thrive, nations prosper.

Mr. President,

As we look to the future, South Africa acknowledges the profound implications of artificial intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies for the creative industries, cultural rights, and the right to development. While AI offers immense opportunities for innovation, education, and access to knowledge, it also raises complex challenges relating to cultural diversity, intellectual property, and equitable benefit-sharing. We must ensure that technological progress serves humanity as a whole and that developing countries are not left behind in the digital revolution. A rights-based, inclusive, and ethical governance framework for AI is therefore essential.

Equally, South Africa recognizes the vital role of civil society organizations in advancing the right to development at the grassroots level. Civil society acts as a bridge between policy and people, ensuring that development strategies are informed by the realities of local communities. Their participation strengthens accountability, promotes transparency, and gives voice to those most affected by inequality and exclusion.

Mr. President,

In these challenging times, South Africa underscores the importance of solidarity, multilateralism as guiding principles of international cooperation. Only through genuine partnership, mutual respect, and shared responsibility can we achieve the transformative promise of the right to development for present and future generations.

I thank you.