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

Public participation: a tool for development

Tuesday 28 October 2025, 10:00 – 11:30

Introductory Remarks
Presented by Isabelle Durant

Please check against delivery

I'm going to be speaking in French. I'd like to bid a welcome to the brilliant experts with us and given that they are extremely wonderful and very diverse from various backgrounds. I'll be quite brief in my introduction. Indeed, the issue of the participation of inhabitants of old stakeholders in the territory is fundamental under the principle of the right to development.

Now, whether this be as regards land use plan, energy provision and infrastructure development, indeed the right to health and the environment, and any other issue related to land and territory, it is obvious that incorporating experiences needs but also the diversity of the expectations of inhabitants and those living on the territory, incorporating their practices, their knowledge. Even for the most marginalized groups who are least represented within a territory, all of this is vital. And we know that when people are truly committed and involved from the outset of a process, that this is obviously a guarantee that the issue at hand will be properly addressed and that the outcomes and results, as well as the implementation would also be monitored, including by the inhabitants themselves. And thus, their contribution contributes to the outcome.

However, things are not as straightforward as that. Participation isn't just a concept, it is also true practice, and there needs to be a framework that needs to be defined for their participation. It needs to be accessible to all, including to the most marginalized groups. This raises issues as regards language and understanding of information and training. The framework needs to be inclusive in nature. It needs to be transparent, and everyone must be aware of it.

Everyone needs to have the same information, and as today with our four speakers, I will ask them once again, based on their own experiences, what are the conditions to ensure the success of the participation of stakeholders and inhabitants?

How do we organize discussions between inhabitants, groups of inhabitants who do not share the same viewpoint?

We shouldn't believe that by definition everyone thinks the same thing or is expecting the same thing from a certain infrastructure, infrastructure or body.

And lastly, how have they been able to manage potential disputes or conflicts linked to various differing expectations from groups of persons who do not share the same point of view when it comes to the participation within a certain framework in a certain territory? So these are the questions I would like to hear, and I'd like to hear the inputs as well.

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