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

Transcript of statement by Isabelle Durant

Please check against delivery

This is my third year as a member of this Expert Mechanism to contribute to making the right to development a concrete and tangible reality, and one that serves populations. But it is at least the 25th anniversary of much of my citizen and political engagement being devoted to development and cooperation in an executive, legislative or civil society role. The 1986 Declaration and everything built since then in terms of reflections, intellectual production, law, and projects on the ground, all of this is very much evident to me. But the cascade of crises that we've seen for many years and the glaring inequalities that we see between regions of the world and within regions only makes this reality starker. But we need to be clear. We're very far off the mark. We can do better.

As was said this morning by the representative of Uganda in the general debate, the context has seriously changed in recent years. And Klentiana brilliantly explained this, the path that we have travelled and our Mechanism does need to take into account this transformation, be this through studies and political or policy papers that we could produce and will produce, be this in these sessions that we have organized in New York and Geneva and in our annual report, or be this through visits, bilateral meetings, meetings on the ground or at international conferences where some of us may participate in application of and going beyond the principle development as set out in the Declaration.

Development itself is more than ever the cornerstone. Even though there are deep inequalities between regions and in regions, it is the cornerstone of multilateral dialogue in the current system. And for some time, clearly, fortunately, development is not seen as an economic indicator, even though economic indicators are largely being questioned today. And this is very much the essence of the 2030 Agenda and the Pact for the Future, which has been added to it. And all of the decisions that have been taken and the role that can be played by negotiators and facilitators of this covenant. At every opportunity and in the future, we need to work not only on the Declaration as is, but also on the way in which these principles can tackle the current challenges for populations concerned.

I would like to summarize the important points. There are four of them.

First, going beyond dependence to partnership in North-South Corporation, but also South-South and triangular corporation. These are not perfect by definition for our economies to be less dependent on imports and more anchored in local cooperation, local production and cooperation, better international architecture, which has been deeply reformed so as to correct the many asymmetries in terms of debt borrowing and investment risk. Our economies need to be less extractivist so that added value linked to transformation can create local jobs and activity. The same is true for technology transfer and the development of productive capacity. And finally, to make our economies better integrated in international trade chains. And also, we need to change the nature of relations between partners in the discussion. And this is something many of you mentioned this morning.

My second point, integrating a just climatic transition as part of the development debate on the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. The climate crisis cannot take the place of development financing, but it is clear in the current context of a reduction of development aid, which between us is a total contradiction of the principle of right to development. The climate dimension is more and more an important lever of development because every effort, every policy, every investment in mitigation and adaptation has direct and indirect impacts on all development components, be they economic, social, poverty alleviation, healthcare or human rights. We therefore need to use all of our tools and opportunities for climate financing, and these need to be proportionate to the vulnerabilities.

Now, the third goal that I've set myself making digital transformation serve development, there is the resource aspect and then use and governance, in terms of resources for the digital transformation. For developed countries who have these resources, they need to put an end to, or rather, needs to be an end to the high prices for developing countries for importing. This is completely unfair in terms of access and use of technology. The right to development involves taking into account all of the issues relating to artificial intelligence and especially generative AI, which we will discuss on Wednesday in terms of economic and cultural dominance, and this is another domain where I think our mechanism could go further.

Now, my fourth and final point, the right to development, cannot be seen outside the local approach. This is what best enables inclusion of the population of indigenous peoples with strict gender equality, including their contributions, their specific needs and their participation, which must be FPIC. And I would say ex ante, never ex post. Because this is meaningful only if it begins at the start and not just at the end of a process. This is a shared responsibility at all levels - local, national, regional and international.

In today's context, I believe that there is a pillar we could develop in future. This is the contribution of the right to development to peace and security, given the many conflicts which are shattering lives and impacting whole generations and nullifying any prospect for development. Within our Mechanism and as far as we are capable, I commit to having the broadest vision possible, including all of these elements in our work and anything you could suggest to us as well.

In this mechanism, we come from different regions of the world. We therefore each of us have different perspectives. It is this cooperation between us which constitutes our added value. We therefore need to practice amongst ourselves and with you respect for these different experiences and perspectives to promote in any way we can synergies, dialogue and engagement by all stakeholders. Beyond any disagreement, it is also up to us to underscore what brings us together as stakeholders and to keep everything on the table for the right to development.

Thank you.

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