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 Juana María Ibáñez Rivas

Please check against delivery

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

The role of non-state actor is a cross-cutting issue in international human rights law. It is reflected across the work of the Expert Mechanism of the Right to Development and in its different thematic report. Paragraph 2 of Article 2 of the Declaration on the Right to Development reminds us that all human beings have a responsibility for development individually and collectively, and they should therefore promote and protect an appropriate political, social, and economic order for development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also calls for revitalized global partnership to achieve all development goals and targets, with the participation of governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system, and other stakeholders. While States remain the main duty bearers for the protection of human rights, including the right to development, this protection also depends on the commitment and active engagement of non-state actors. Almost 40 years after the adoption of the Declaration on the Right to Development, the essential role of this actor is undeniable. Reports of the Expert Mechanism have highlighted good practices that show this contribution. For example, programs for the economic empowerment of urban communities through cooperation among local authorities, NGO and State, ad hoc consultation by Governments with non-state experts on draft law or policies affecting human rights, and strategic partnership among NGO, public institution, national human rights institution ombudsperson and the private sector. These examples demonstrate the importance of cooperation, consultation and partnership, between the States and non-state actors and among non-state actors themselves.

Civil society have played a pivotal role in the evolution and transformation of human rights through story, including with respect to the right to development. Over the past four decades, civil society organizations have actively helped to define the content and scope of the right to development and the corresponding obligation of States. They have represented the voices of individuals and peoples, especially those in vulnerable situation or facing historical or structural discrimination.

National human rights institution with their mandate to monitor State compliance with human rights, are essential to ensure that law, policies and practice are consistent with the protection of the right to development. They can monitor not only the action of public authorities, but also how States regulate, oversee and hold the private sector accountable.

The private sector, in turn, must make sure that its activities do not harm the right to development of individual and people. It must also address any negative consequences of its operation, products and services. This requires not only a clear political commitment to respect human rights, but also effective due diligence to identify, prevent, mitigate and remedy harm when it occurs.

The academic community with professor, researchers, and students, is another key actor. Academia is not only a space to study the right to development. It also is responsible for promoting and protecting this right through education, constructive debate, and the monitoring of State compliance with their obligation.

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

The 40th anniversary of the declaration of the right to development offers an important opportunity to strengthen good practices among non-state actors and to renew their commitment to this right at the national, regional, and global levels. For the Expert Mechanism, this means first, ensuring stronger coordination and cooperation with non-state actors and taking part in strategic activities and processes together with them. Second, taking parent training and awareness raising activities on the content and scope of the right to development and the related obligation of States, together with regional, national, human rights institutions, network, civil society, and academia. And third, working with regional business organizations that promote economic and social development to identify good practices and raise awareness of the private sector responsibility in this area.

Excellencies,

Each non-state actor as has a role to play in ensuring the full recognition, enjoyment, and realization of the right to development. I write that by its very nature called for the active participation and contribution of all.

I thank you.

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