The 12th Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development

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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

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Please check against delivery

Thank you for the invitation to speak. I come here with certain specific proposals for the future celebration of the 40th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Right to Development. But before I get on to those, I just wanted to make some other remarks.

Chair，
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Next year we will be celebrating the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Right to Development. Now, this Declaration is certainly a roadmap for development policies overall, and it is certainly visionary when it comes to the multidimensional crises that humanity is facing. It is nevertheless not implemented, and it is also not familiar to the vast majority of the populations concerned. Why should this be?

Despite its strength, the Declaration on the Right to Development is often absent from political discourse, and it's willingly marginalized because the imposition globally of neoliberal policies, and this has been the case for decades, and they are presented as a solution to all the evils of humanity. In this context, the concept of development has been boiled down solely to economic growth and to the fact that this growth will be obtained thanks to a free market which will bring shared prosperity to all countries and to all sectors of the population. And we are well familiar with the catastrophic result of this. I'm not going to list all of the consequences, the inequality, the climate crisis. You're more familiar with them than even I am. But the most worrying consequence is the increase in the openly racist and xenophobic political parties, the militarization of societies, and the threat to democracy and human rights.

The Declaration spells out that peoples and individuals are both actors and beneficiaries of the right to developments, although the vast majority of people in fact ignore the very existence of this right, and what is more, they are lacking in trust. When we evoked the term of development, given that they are often betrayed by very many so called and development projects, and we speak of monoculture, mining, extraction, hydroelectric power, dams, tourist infrastructure, and so on and so forth. They have been promised prosperity, and at the end of the day they've been stripped of their land and of their livelihoods. So how can we actually reach the concerned population.

CETIM is proposing launching a global campaign on the right to development on the occasion of this 40th anniversary. And we want to do this with social movements and other civil society organizations, with States that are committed to the right to development and with UN bodies, particularly the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development. Now, given that the right to development is both individual and collective, such a campaign should ensure that persons that have historically been ruled out of

decision-making processes on development are made a priority. And I mean oppressed peoples, ural communities, indigenous peoples, women workers, young people, and everyone else who's been excluded. People should be able to choose their own model of development. They must be able to participate equally. And we must ensure that all of this is accessible to the largest number of people. We should have manuals, have radio broadcasts, even plays to be performed in theatres, and all of these initiatives must dovetail with the right to development and the daily fight of communities that are affected by this. Considering land grabbing, access to water and other natural resources, the foreign debt burden, public services, climate justice, impunity of transnational corporations, taxation, and the list goes on.

We propose organizing conferences, seminars, and workshops on the right to development so that individuals and communities concerned can be part of this movement. We would like to put in place a plan of action on financing development, which is decided by the people themselves. For example, we want to propose eliminating fraud and tax evasion by suppressing illicit debt by putting in place fair trading rules.

CETIM was founded in 1970, and we thought up this concept of a bad development. The slogan here is there is not a developed world and an underdeveloped world. There is one single world which is poorly developed or badly developed. We analyse the structural mechanisms of bad development at the economic, trade and finance level, as well as the political, social and cultural level. This is why for decades we've been promoting the right to development through publications, conferences, seminars, and the statements we make at UN bodies and through the work we do with social movements. We have a global network. But despite this, what we do is simply not enough. It's also true that you need appropriate resources in order to conduct such a campaign, and this is why we must align our efforts.

To conclude the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the right to development should not just be a formal commemorative event. It should be a catalyst to make sure that certain sectors of society and rights holders can truly make this right their own. The right to development is not an abstract text. It is the expression of people's combat for dignity, justice and self-steering system. We don't yet know if the covenant on the right to development will be adopted in the short term, but this is not a major drawback. We can press ahead with the Declaration on the Right to Development, which has three implementation mechanisms. Together, we can contribute to building development models which are freely chosen, which are socially fair, which are sustainable environmentally, and which truly belong to the people.

Chair,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for your attention.

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