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

The role of civil society organizations in realizing the right to development at the grassroots level

Wednesday 29 October 2025, 10:00 to 12:00

Concept Note
Presented by Juana María Ibáñez Rivas

Please check against delivery

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

The Declaration on the Right to Development affirms 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." Within this framework of participation, civil society organizations (CSOs) play a crucial role, given their knowledge, experience, and proximity to individuals and peoples - the right-holders of the right to development.

Since the beginning of its mandate, the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development (EMRTD) has sought to promote the consistent and meaningful participation of CSOs. In its engagement with them, the EMRTD has encouraged CSOs to raise awareness of and mobilize around the right to development, while also learning from their initiatives, their challenges, and the difficulties they face - including at the grassroots level. The knowledge and experience held by CSOs at the grassroots level have been, and continue to be, indispensable for the Expert Mechanism, States, and other stakeholders. They help us better understand situations of vulnerability, historical and structural discrimination, as well as the violence and insecurity that hinder the realization of the right to development of individuals and peoples.

The EMRTD remains mindful that sustained dialogue with CSOs is essential to advance the promotion and operationalization of the right to development. Such dialogue allows for a deeper understanding of the content, scope, and dimensions of this right, and thus helps ensure that individuals and peoples can truly take ownership of it and invoke it.

CSOs engaged in the promotion and protection of the right to development therefore play a complementary role to that of States, which remain the primary duty-bearers in protecting this right. Through their activities, these CSOs also become authentic human rights defenders, further complementing the work of the regional and universal human rights systems.

In this context, today's panel was conceived with three main objectives: **First**, to identify whether there has been an evolution in the appropriation of the right to development by CSOs;

Second, to highlight the strategies employed by CSOs to invoke and protect the right to development of individuals and peoples, and where applicable, the outcomes achieved;

and **third**, to identify measures and practices that could be implemented by States, in complementarity with CSOs, to ensure that individuals and peoples are aware of, and can effectively exercise, their right to development.

We are truly honored to have, on this panel, a distinguished representative of the State and distinguished representatives of civil society organizations, thereby renewing our commitment to dialogue with both State and non-State actors to advance the recognition, enjoyment, and exercise of the right to development by individuals and peoples.

* * * * *