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

Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda

Coordination Meeting with Other United Nations Mechanisms on the Right to Development

Palais des Nations, Room XVI, Geneva

Statement by Mr. Surya Deva,
Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development

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Hello everyone, the Chair of the Expert Mechanism, other colleagues of the Expert Mechanism, Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

It's really my great pleasure to share brief reflections about the current state of play, about the right to development at this 12th session of the Expert Mechanism. It's unfortunate that I am not able to join in person because I will be traveling to New York to present my report to General Assembly. But in my remarks, I would like to focus on three aspects.

First of all, I will talk about the current relevance of the right to development in the context of the emerging world disorder. Secondly, I want to talk about the importance of collaboration, because the resources at this particular point of time are very limited, and United Nations is facing an unprecedented budget crisis. And finally, I want to look ahead about the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Right to Development, where you should be going.

So let me start with what I would call the interrelated crises that the world is facing. So in my report to the General Assembly that I will be presenting on 27 October, I talk about this, that we should see this crisis in terms of an emerging world disorder. And this world disorder, in my view, has three strands that should be at least reflected upon.

The first is economic disorder. We have tremendous economic inequalities both within countries and between countries. And this is not bridging, despite many steps that have been taken.

Secondly, we see increasingly the environmental disorder, the economic development is not respecting the planetary boundaries. And increasingly, we see the crisis in terms of the triple planetary challenge is worsening, and that is where it is crucial that we develop a model of economic development that respects the environment, that respects the biodiversity and operates within the planetary boundaries.

And the third disorder that I can think of is the institutional disorder. The world is witnessing significant number of conflicts continuously, and that shows that the Security Council is not able to perform its mandate of maintaining peace and security in the world. But we also have other elements of this institutional disorder, and we can look at international financial architecture, whether this is IMF or World Bank, as part of this international disorder.

And in my view, the right to development provides a pathway to overcome this current emerging world disorder. And in my report, I try to articulate that we should look towards a new model of development which is inclusive, sustainable and participatory. If it is inclusive, then it will not leave anyone behind. And the economic disorder that I was talking about can be embraced. On the other hand, if the development is sustainable, then we can overcome the environmental disorder that I was referring to. And finally, if we have governance models at the national level as well as at the regional

and international level, which are participatory, then we should be able to overcome the current institutional disorder.

Now, let me move on to the second issue that I wish to touch upon, which is about the importance of collaboration in this crisis. In terms of the financial resources that the United Nations is facing, in relation to right to development, especially in the context of Geneva, we at least have four parallel mechanisms that are there.

We have the Office of the High Commissioner working on right to development, and this is specifically part of the resolution establishing the Office of the High Commissioner. Then we have the Intergovernmental Working Group that has been deliberating on the right development issues, including the covenant on the right development until recently. Thirdly, we have the Expert Mechanics on the Right to Development. And fourthly, my mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to development.

So because we have the four parallel mechanisms which are trying to achieve the common goal, which is the realization of right to development, it becomes more important and critical that we establish value for money. Instead of duplicating, we need to build synergy and collaboration. But that collaboration also requires deeper dialogues amongst these mechanisms. And unfortunately, because of the limited resources, that is not feasible. For instance, I'm not able to have meaningful conversation with the Expert Mechanism because of the funding crisis. So of course I'm able to send this video, but this is no substitute for in-person participation and deeper engagement with the Working Group as well as with the Expert Mechanism to ensure that we are complementing each other's work rather than duplicating and providing value addition to promote the realization of right to development all over the world. So very much hope that States mobilize resources for these mechanisms because there is not much point in creating and establishing these mechanisms if States cannot allocate adequate resources for these.

Now, the third and the final issue that I wish to briefly touch upon is where do we go forward. As we approach the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Right to Development, next one year is going to be very, very crucial in my view. We very much hope that the proposed international covenant on the Right to Development could be adopted. The process has been extremely slow after the Human Rights Council sent to New York. But I very much hope that things change and there's a momentum, and we can build some kind of consensus, at least broad consensus, for the adoption of this particular covenant. But we should also look beyond this covenant to realize the right to development, and there have been some interesting developments in recent months. For instance, in July this year, two advisory opinions, one of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, as well as the International Court of Justice, they provided interesting reflections about sustainable development and the relevance of human rights and how it plays in the context of climate change. In addition, we have the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recently adopting a General Comment 27, which reflects again the environmental dimension of sustainable development. Now we have also ASEAN adopting a declaration on the right to clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and we are also proposing to adopt a declaration on right to development and peace. So these are significant, reasonable developments, international developments, and also, we have African Commission trying to develop general comment in these particular areas. So we should look to build on these initiatives to ensure that going forward, we can realize the right to development for each and every one everywhere. And I very much hope there could be work together to achieve this particular goal.

Thank you very much.

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