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Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development
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Agenda Item: Item 4 – Implementation of the mandate and programme of work: (a) Consideration of thematic studies (ii) Peace and security and the right to development;

Peace and Security and the Right to Development

Statement by
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Chairman Humanity First UK

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, colleagues, and friends,

It's a privilege to be here today to speak about something I have not only studied as a principle, but witnessed first-hand — the fragile, vital relationship between peace, security, and the right to development.

Too often, we discuss development as a technical agenda — roads, schools, infrastructure etc. Yet development is not just about what we build, but about "how" we build it — and whether peace and dignity are allowed to take root.

During war, development turns into emergency response and fear replaces opportunity leading to the withering of human potential. Only when peace and security form a bedrock of fertile soil can the seeds of development grow.

Over the past decade, my humanitarian work with Humanity First has taken me into some of the harshest realities of conflict.

I will never forget walking through the shattered streets of Gaza — hospitals overflowing, children traumatised, parents searching for food or medicine. What struck me was not only the suffering but the "defiance in despair." Amid the rubble, local doctors kept going, volunteers improvised operating rooms, families shared what little they had. Even with bombs falling, people found ways to care for one another. That "is" the humanitarian spirit — the stubborn belief that compassion still matters.

IN A CRISIS WE PUT HUMANITY FIRST.

In Syria, during the dark days of displacement, I met families who had made long journeys crossing borders on foot, carrying nothing but the clothes on their back. A young boy I met in a refugee camp told me that one day he wanted to become a doctor — “so he can help his nation” That simple dream has stayed with me. It reminds me that peace begins not in conference halls, but in the hearts of those who refuse to surrender humanity.

And today hearing directly from Dr Sjela I also feel very proud as a young volunteer in Humanity First. I remember serving in Bosnia Herzegovina during the war as a young medical student volunteer and now proud to hear her representation makes you really have faith that peace and security can actually take hold when the right systems and efforts are put in place.

I also remember walking through the streets of Mosul, after ISIS was pushed back, I walked through communities trying to rebuild their schools and clinics. The devastation was immense, but so was the determination.

Kofi Annan once said there is **“no peace without development — and no development without peace.”** Every visit to a conflict zone has confirmed this global truth for me.

When stability and opportunity disappear, extremism, poverty, and displacement follow. But when people can rebuild their livelihoods — when education, healthcare, and justice are secured — communities defend peace themselves, because they have something worth protecting, as we have just heard.

Humanity First works on this principle of resilience. After every crisis, our immediate task is relief — food, water, medical aid. But our longer-term mission is recovery and rehabilitation to restore livelihoods.

In Africa, this means clinics in The Gambia, clean water in Ghana, and vocational training in Uganda. In Asia and the Middle East, it means classrooms, maternal health, and reconstructing lives where war once raged. And in South America it means quality health care for the most needy. These are the building blocks for peace and security

But peace cannot be the burden of humanitarian organizations alone. The Right to Development, enshrined by this United Nations, is not a policy document — it is a moral call to action.

IN A CRISIS WE PUT **HUMANITY FIRST.**

It compels us to shape global systems — in trade, finance, climate, and education — it empowers rather than excludes. We must recognize that injustice anywhere threatens peace everywhere. When whole generations in Gaza or Lebanon grow up displaced and fearful, the echo of their suffering reaches far beyond their own borders.

Without justice, there is no peace. Without opportunity, there is no security. And without compassion, there can be no true development.

As Chairman of Humanity First UK, I am proud that our volunteers — most from the very communities we serve — work with quiet courage and remarkable faith in humanity. Across more than sixty countries, they serve with dedication and passion

In these troubled times we expand our WASH, education, health, shelter and resilience programmes across Africa, the Middle East, South America and South East Asia. In collaboration with governments, NGOs, and the UN, our goal is to transform crisis zones into communities of opportunity.

And in these troubled times let me share the words of two great global advocates for peace; His Holiness Mirza Masroor Ahmad the Head of the Worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community who has been warning us for decades about the flames of war, he states;

"We should realise and recognise the critical need of the hour. We must accept that peace can only be built upon the solid foundations of honesty, integrity and justice. These are the keys to peace. Until there is honesty and justice, no solution will ever prove beneficial"

And more recently His Holiness Pope Leo XIV

"The principle established after the Second World War, which prohibited nations from using force to violate the borders of others, has been completely undermined… Instead, peace is sought through weapons as a condition for asserting one's own dominion. This gravely threatens the rule of law, which is the foundation of all peaceful civil coexistence"

IN A CRISIS WE PUT **HUMANITY FIRST.**

Friends, I began by saying that development cannot exist without peace. Let me end by saying that peace cannot exist without each of us “putting Humanity first”

So today, let us renew that promise. Let us insist that peace and development walk hand in hand, that compassion guide policy, and that the right to live with dignity belongs to us all.

Regardless of our faith, colour, and background, let's work as one to create absolute justice and peace. In doing so let's wipe away the tears of the distressed.

Thank you very much

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