I would like to thank the Expert Mechanism for this timely and important draft study. As the draft study recalls, the Preamble to the Declaration on the Right to Development recognizes international peace and security as essential elements for the realization of that right, while Articles 5 and 7 link the right to development to the elimination of grave human rights violations, the promotion of peace and security, and disarmament in the service of development.

A particular strength of the draft is that it does not treat peace and security in narrow or purely military terms. Instead, it places them within a broader framework of inclusive societies, equality, participation, accountability, and justice. That approach matters because the right to development is not limited to economic growth or material progress. It is concerned with whether every person and all peoples are able to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy development in conditions consistent with human dignity and the full realization of human rights.

Seen in that light, the draft's reference to the rule of law is especially important. The study rightly notes that peace requires compliance with States' obligations to respect and guarantee human rights within inclusive societies that strengthen the rule of law, and that failure to do so creates fertile ground for violent conflict. This helps show that the relationship between peace and security and the right to development is not confined to situations of armed conflict. It also concerns the everyday functioning of institutions: whether power is exercised lawfully, whether courts are independent, whether rights can be claimed in practice, and whether people can participate in public life without fear.

This, in my view, deserves emphasis because a society may not be in a situation of war and yet still undermine the right to development if it weakens judicial independence, suppresses dissent, restricts civic space, or uses law as an instrument of intimidation rather than protection. In such situations, there may be formal stability, but not necessarily rights-based peace.

This is where freedom of expression, freedom of association, and peaceful assembly become indispensable. If the right to development includes meaningful participation, and the Declaration expressly links development to participation, contribution, and enjoyment, then the rights that make participation possible must be treated as central to its realization. Freedom of expression allows individuals and communities to question authority, expose corruption, challenge exclusion, defend rights, and contribute to public debate. Freedom of association and peaceful assembly allow them to organize collectively through unions, civil society organizations, women's groups, youth movements, indigenous organizations, professional associations, and community structures. These are the means through which development priorities are contested, shaped, and made more inclusive.

Fair trial rights are equally central to this framework. Equality before courts and tribunals, independent and impartial adjudication, due process, access to counsel, and protection against arbitrary detention are not merely procedural safeguards for individual cases. They are part of what prevents the law from becoming a tool of exclusion. They are what allow journalists, defenders, students, trade unionists, opposition figures, community leaders, and ordinary citizens to remain in public life when the coercive power of the State is exercised. When peaceful expression or civic participation is met with vague charges, abusive prosecution, excessive delay, pretrial detention, or politically influenced adjudication, the harm extends beyond the individual case. Confidence in legality is weakened. Participation is chilled. Entire communities learn that public engagement carries legal risk. That has direct implications for the right to development because participation cannot be active, free, and meaningful where law is experienced primarily as a threat.

At Columbia Law School's Human Rights Institute, this relationship is visible through the criminal trials we monitor involving journalists, human rights defenders, students, protesters, opposition figures, and other civic actors. Trial monitoring helps show, when criminal proceedings are marked by insufficient evidence, excessive delay, arbitrary detention, vague charges, or politically influenced adjudication, the legal process itself can become a form of punishment. That not only harms the individuals targeted. It also sends a wider message that public participation carries legal risk. In that sense, fair trial rights are not only protections for defendants. They are institutional guarantees that help preserve civic space, public trust, and the conditions for active, free, and meaningful participation in public life.

There is also strong empirical support for this point. Comparative research from V-Dem finds that democratization is associated with higher long term economic growth, including roughly 20 percent higher GDP per capita over 25 years compared with countries that remain autocratic. The same body of research links democracy to stronger social protection and better health and public service outcomes. The World Bank likewise treats rule of law, voice and accountability, and control of corruption as core governance dimensions shaping development outcomes, while UNDP has emphasized that stronger democracy is associated with more equitable access to resources and opportunities.

For that reason, I think the study's analysis is highly relevant not only to armed conflict, militarization, and post conflict recovery, but also to contexts where deterioration happens through legal and institutional erosion. That too is part of the relationship between peace and security and the right to development. It affects whether people can influence decisions, whether harms can be remedied, and whether institutions can be trusted to mediate conflict without violence.

The draft is also particularly strong in linking peace to inclusive societies and to the need to address structural and historical discrimination. That dimension is

essential. Inequality and exclusion can become drivers of instability, especially where communities are denied voice, representation, protection, or equal access to justice. Here again, the rule of law matters because it is not satisfied by formal equality alone. It requires institutions that can respond to patterns of discrimination, provide remedy, and protect participation on equal terms.

This is especially important when viewed through the position of children and youth. The right to development has a clear intergenerational dimension. It is not concerned only with present outcomes, but with whether States are creating conditions in which future generations can live in dignity and participate in shaping their societies. As the OHCHR has noted, children and young people are disproportionately affected by poverty, exclusion, environmental degradation, displacement, unemployment, and marginalization, while international human rights law protects their right to be heard in matters affecting them.

In some contexts, children and young people are not simply excluded from decision making. They are also detained, intimidated, criminalized, or otherwise penalized for peaceful protest, expression, or civic engagement. When that happens, the issue is not only one of individual liberty. It is a right to development issue, because a generation is being pushed out of the public sphere and denied the ability to help shape the future it will inherit. Children and youth must therefore be seen not only as beneficiaries of development, but as rights holders whose voice, participation, and access to justice the law must protect.

The same is true in post conflict and transitional settings. Where impunity persists, where institutions remain weak or captured, or where civic actors cannot participate safely and meaningfully, peace remains fragile and development remains incomplete, especially in contexts of transitional justice.

Ultimately, the study makes clear that peace, security, and development depend on both strong institutions and the effective protection of rights. Development cannot be active, free, and meaningful where people cannot speak, organize, seek justice, or participate without fear. The rule of law, civic space, and fair trial guarantees are therefore not secondary concerns. They are essential to sustainable and inclusive development.