The 10th 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 discussion and interactive dialogue
Palais des Nations, Room XXI, Geneva

Engaging the Unengaged: Building inclusive development through a meaningful civil society participation

Tuesday 29 October 2024, 10h30 to 12h30

Introductory remarks
Presented by Liliana Valiña

Distinguished delegates, dear colleagues,

I am pleased to introduce today this panel, which focuses on engaging the unengaged, and seeks to build inclusive development through the meaningful participation of so-called civil society.

The Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development has consistently recognized the fundamental role of civil society in promoting inclusive and sustainable development, with the human person as the central subject of the right to development promoted by the Declaration.

However, as we focus on operationalizing the right to development for all people, it becomes evident that certain groups in situations of vulnerability or discrimination are excluded from meaningful participation in development processes, both in terms of their contributions and in terms of the benefits derived from development.

This exclusion undermines the very principles of active, free and meaningful participation that underpin the foundations of the right to development.

Civil society plays a vital role in ensuring that the voices of diverse groups and communities, including women, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, migrants and especially youth, are heard and taken into account, in order to ensure diversity of representation and their participation and influence in decision-making.

I would like to recall that the objectives of this panel are:

1. To identify and analyze the systemic barriers that hinder the participation of marginalized and discriminated groups and communities in development initiatives. These barriers may include discriminatory policies and practices, lack of access to information and resources, as well as situations of cultural and social exclusion, among others.

2. Explore innovative strategies to foster inclusive and meaningful civil society participation. This may involve creating safe spaces for vulnerable groups to participate appropriately, providing capacity building support and ensuring that their voices are effectively heard and have an impact on decision-making processes.

3. Examine the role of different actors, such as States, international organizations, the private sector and civil society organizations in promoting inclusive development. Each has a role, responsibilities and opportunities for the realization of the right to development. States have a responsibility to create enabling environments for civil society participation, both domestically and internationally, including through cooperation, while international organizations and institutions, as well as other civil society actors, can amplify their voices and provide technical

and financial support. The private sector can contribute by adopting responsible business practices consistent with the right to development perspective and by engaging with civil society organizations.

4. Identify recommendations and avenues for action to enhance the participation of a diverse civil society in future development initiatives. These recommendations may include strengthening accountability mechanisms, promoting transparency and inclusiveness in decision-making processes, and supporting the development of civil society organizations in marginalized or underrepresented communities.

We trust that with the contributions of the distinguished panelists in addressing these challenges and highlighting the opportunities, will help to generate a greater commitment to pressing changes and reforms, such as those addressed at the recent Summit of the Future. Without this urgent transformation, it will not be possible to reverse the current crises and the deep inequality that prevent the voices of all individuals and peoples from being heard and valued, regardless of where they come from or the circumstances in which they find themselves. Guaranteeing the full realization of the right to development for all people requires effective spaces for participation and compelling and forceful changes in the current scenario and practices throughout the globe. Thank you in advance for your contributions today to this crucial debate.