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Interactive Dialogue

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Dear Chair-Rapporteur, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to address you as the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to development at the 26th session of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Development.

Let me begin by thanking Ambassador Akram for his leadership in keeping the focus on the right to development in very challenging times (both financially and otherwise) and also for introducing fresh thematic perspectives to the discussion during this session.

Mr Chair

In my remarks today, I will focus on three aspects: outline a few practical measures that States should take to realise the right to development in the current context, describe steps that I am taking to mainstream the right to development, and highlight the focus of my reports for this year as well as for 2026 and 2027.

As we approach the 40th anniversary of the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development, it is timely for us to reflect on where we stand regarding the right to development. This is more important as the world is witnessing numerous interconnected challenges – most of the SDG targets are off track, inequalities and technology divides are worsening, public debt levels are becoming unsustainable for many developing countries, conflicts continue unabated, planetary boundaries are consistently ignored, civic space is shrinking, democracies are declining, multilateralism is collapsing, trade barriers are increasing, and racism and xenophobia and gender-based violence are escalating. In short, a new "world disorder" is emerging.

I propose the following four practical steps that States and other actors should take to realise the right to development as well as to pushback against the new world disorder.

First, States should avoid "cherry picking" or wearing their political lenes when approaching the right to development. It is critical to develop a common understanding about the right to development in line with the Declaration on the Right to Development and other relevant instruments. As I have articulated in my 2023 vision report (A/HRC/54/27), the right to development is a human right with both individual and collective dimensions. Many other human rights have such twin dimensions. Moreover, the right to development is a holistic right

encompassing economic, social, cultural and political development. Since the right to development is a human right, States do not have this right – rather, States have a duty to respect, protect and fulfil this right acting both individually and collectively.

Second, States should see the right to development not as a problem but as a solution to multiple crises that I have mentioned. Various aspects of the right to development provide a transformative pathway to overcome these challenges. For example, the principle of fair distribution of benefits could help in redressing inequality, while resolving conflicts would require promoting international cooperation, practising disarmament and reforming the UN Security Council. On the other hand, embedding the principles of intergenerational equity and common but differentiated responsibilities in decision making will go a long way in addressing climate change.

Third, the right to development should not be seen as a compartment but a cross-cutting thread relevant to whatever States and other actors do. From this perspective, it must underpin the outcome document of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development as well as decisions at COP30. It should also shape the Political Declaration to be adopted at the Second World Summit for Social Development.

Four, States should adopt the proposed Covenant on the Right to Development as a matter of priority. Doing so will send a signal that the right to development enjoys a status similar to other human rights. At the same time, instead of waiting for the adoption and ratification of the Covenant, greater efforts should be made to implement this right at the national and regional levels through various law and policy initiatives.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me now highlight some of the steps that I am taking to mainstream the right to development.

I continue to participate and speak at a significant number of events in all world regions to underscore the importance of the right to development. For example, last month I participated in an "AICHR (ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights) Consultation on the Human Right to Development" held in Kuala Lumpur. Later this month, I will speak at an

Africa Day event on "natural resources and development" organised by the Government of Slovenia.

I am also trying to build bridges by organising side events in both Geneva and New York. For instance, yesterday I co-organized with the Permanent Mission of China a successful side event on "Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Right to Development". I am planning another side event around SDG5 during the High-Level Political Forum in New York. So far, Brazil and Germany have agreed to co-sponsor this side event.

In addition, I am about to publish a flyer, "Decoding the right to development", which I hope will enable in overcoming misunderstandings or misinterpretations about the right to development. As delegations may have noticed, in April 2025 I issued a Negotiation Brief outlining key considerations that should underpin negotiations of the outcome document of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development. I also plan to develop a policy brief to provide practical guidance to States in implementing the right to development at the local, provincial and national levels.

The event series, "Development Dialogues", that I had launched last year has received lot of positive feedback from States and other stakeholders. I plan to organise a few virtual or in-person events under this series this year. Further information about these events will be shared in due course.

As I had mentioned last year, I am starting a new project to conduct a Global Mapping of the right to development in all UN Member States. Based on a template developed by my mandate, the mapping for each country will be done by university researchers and students to document the state of play regarding the right to development.

Mr Chair,

Let me now briefly mention the thematic focus of my reports for this year as well as for 2026 and 2027. My report to the Human Rights Council's 60th session will focus on "Nexus between gender equality and the right to development". I chose this focus because SDG5 on gender equality is under review this year at the High-Level Political Forum and the world community is commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. At

the same time, we are also unfortunately witnessing a backlash against gender equality globally. Against this backdrop, it is critical to reinforce the importance of achieving gender equality. Women and girls – that is, about half of the world's population – cannot realise their right to development and other human rights if they continue to face various forms of inequality, discrimination, violence and exclusion. At the same time, the report will highlight how the right to development could be leveraged to achieve substantive gender equality.

My report to the General Assembly will focus on "Financing for inclusive, sustainable and participatory development". As States are set to negotiate the outcome document of the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development, this report will articulate transformative financing pathways for inclusive, sustainable and participatory development. It is critical to overcome existing barriers to financing for development to implement the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

In response to my open call for input, we have received over 70 submissions from States, UN agencies, businesses, civil society organisations and academia. In addition, I have been organising in person or virtual consultations to collect additional input for my reports. I would like to thank all stakeholders who have made a submission or participated in these consultations.

Let me also allude to the focus of my reports in 2026 and 2027. Next year, my Council report will provide guidance to States and other decision makers on ensuring active, free and meaningful participation of all people in decision making process. The focus of the report to the General Assembly will be on the linkages between the three UN pillars of peace and security, human rights and sustainable development.

In 2027, one report will unpack the relation between migration and right to development, while the other report will focus on exploring positive as well and negative impacts of new technologies on the right to development.

Mr Chair

I am grateful for an opportunity to participate in an annual interactive dialogue organised by the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Development. I will continue to

collaborate with the Working Group and other stakeholders to operationalise the right to development at local, national, regional and international levels.

Thank you for your kind attention.