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Mr President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to present to the Human Rights Council my report on "Nexus between gender equality and the right to development". I will also be reporting on a country visit to Honduras conducted in November 2024.

However, before presenting my report, let me address a serious concern. As the Chair of the Coordination Committee of the UN Special Procedures, I condemn the US Government's sanctions against my colleague Francesca Albanese, the Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territory. Sanctioning a Special Rapporteur appointed by the Human Rights Council violates international law and is a direct attack on the integrity of the entire UN human rights system. I call on the Council to denounce these sanctions and request the General Assembly to seek an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

Mr President

The right to development is sometimes considered to be in opposition to the achievement of gender equality. The polarisation between States championing gender equality and States promoting the right to development reflects that divide. This report seeks to overcome such misconceptions. It elaborates the mutually reinforcing nexus between gender equality and the right to development. The enjoyment of gender equality by girls and women, in all their diversity, would lead to the realisation of their right to development. Conversely, realising the right to development of girls and women would result in gender equality.

Distinguished delegates

Gender equality is a cross-cutting foundational human right that must not fluctuate with changes in the political climate.

Despite progress made over the years, girls and women continue to face various forms of discrimination in both private and public spheres due to discriminatory laws, patriarchal norms and structural barriers. According to the *2024 Gender Snapshot*, none of the SDG5 targets have been met. Women enjoy less than two-thirds of the legal rights available to men. The age of retirement for women is lower than that of men in 62 economies. Women spend 2.5

times more hours than men on unpaid domestic work. Girls and women are also disproportionately affected by poverty, austerity measures, climate change, conflicts, new technologies and unilateral sanctions. Moreover, women human rights defenders and girl climate activists continue to face sexist attacks in all world regions.

These worrying trends must be reversed because girls and women – comprising about half of the world's population – cannot realise their economic, social, cultural and political development unless there is substantive gender equality.

Mr President

Gender equality is critical not merely for girls and women. Gender equality is beneficial for all human beings. At the same time, girls and women should not be seen as recipients of empowerment by others. Rather, when girls and women are enabled as agents of change, they contribute to creating a more inclusive, peaceful and sustainable world.

In a recently published leaflet, I have tried to demystify the right to development. The right to development is a transformative human right because it seeks to address various historical injustices. As the international community commemorates the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, I urge all States, UN entities, businesses and other actors to leverage this transformative potential of the right to development to address the root causes of gender inequality.

Distinguished delegates

In my report, I highlight how five illustrative aspects of the right to development could be employed to achieve substantive gender equality: namely, the collective dimension; active, free and meaningful participation; fair distribution; intersectionality; and international cooperation. These aspects of the right to development can create enabling conditions for girls and women to become change-makers. Let me offer a few examples to demonstrate this point:

- ✓ The *collective dimension* of the right to development should enable women and their organisations to conduct collective advocacy for reforming discriminatory laws, patriarchal norms, social stereotypes and cultural values.

- ✓ If girls and women can enjoy *active, free and meaningful participation* in decision-making at every level, this will enable them to fight discrimination, exclusion and violence that they continue to face in both private and public spheres.
- ✓ If *intersectional* data is collected by States and businesses, this will allow them to respond effectively to multiple forms of discrimination that girls and women face.
- ✓ The principle of *fair distribution* should enable women to demand equal land ownership, access to finance and an equitable sharing of unpaid domestic and care work between men and women.
- ✓ *International cooperation* in the form of development aid, technology transfer, capacity-building and technical assistance should assist in combating gender-based discrimination and achieving substantive gender equality.

Mr President

I also have the pleasure to present the report of my country visit to Honduras conducted in November 2024. During the visit, I met with representatives of several government ministries and institutes, UN agencies, non-governmental organisations and industry associations. I express my gratitude to the Government of Honduras for its cooperation and to the representatives of various stakeholders for their valuable input.

I observed that the Government is committed to embracing a more sustainable and inclusive model of development and has taken some initial steps in this direction, such as the abolition of employment and economic development zones, a ban on new extractive exploitation licences, the prohibition of open-pit mining, prioritising social programmes to address inequality and improve living conditions, providing free meals in schools and offering solidarity scholarships to low-income students.

At the same time, Honduras faces multiple challenges: systemic discrimination against Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Hondurans, law and order problems, land conflicts, weak environmental governance, climate crisis, attacks against human rights defenders, a high national debt burden and multiple arbitration claims by foreign investors. In my report, I have made recommendations to operationalise a model of planet-centred participatory development, which balances economic growth with social inclusion and environmental sustainability. For example, the Government should take measures to address poverty, socio-economic disparities,

improve access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, and protect human rights defenders. Moreover, the Government should strengthen land rights and secure land titles for Indigenous communities and develop a national policy on investment governance that provides incentives only to responsible investors.

Thank you very much for your kind attention and I look forward to the interactive dialogue.