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Excellencies, distinguished experts, ladies and gentlemen

I am delighted to be in Beijing to participate in the Forum on Global Human Rights Governance. I would like to congratulate the Chinese Government in showing leadership in organising this Forum and thank the Government for inviting me to speak at the Forum.

The timing of the Forum is important for two reasons. First, in times when multilateralism is collapsing, the UN Charter's based global governance is under serious threat and human rights are facing a backlash, we need forums like this to have dialogue around issues of common concern and to defend the value of human rights.

Second, as the world community is commemorating the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Right to Development, it is time to reflect how the right to development can provide transformative pathways to address some of the current global challenges.

In my remarks today, I will propose that the global human rights governance should ensure a dignified life, within planetary boundaries, for every human being everywhere.

However, the current international order is leaving behind too many people and is polluting the environment. That is where the right to development offers practical tools to achieve inclusive, sustainable and participatory development.

Before I elaborate such a potential of the right to development, let me briefly highlight the interdependent relationship between development and human rights. States and other actors should not see any conflict between the two. Nor should they pursue the two in a sequence. As the right to development itself is a human right, development should be rooted in human rights. At the same time, human rights should contribute to all people realising fully their development potential.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we gather in Beijing, the world is facing multiple crises. Let me focus on three interrelated crises as the failure of the current international order.

*The first crisis is inequality within and between countries*

About 800 million people are living in extreme poverty, 363 million people are facing acute hunger, and 2.4 billion people still have no access to internet.

Oxfam's 2026 report estimates that only 12 men have more wealth than the poorest half of humanity, that is, more than four billion people.

Inequalities between countries are also stark. According to UNCTAD, 61 developing countries spend more than 10% of government revenues on interest payments, and about 3.4 billion people live in countries that spend more on interest payments than on health or education. Developing countries also face much higher borrowing costs, experience disproportionate climate impacts and suffer from illicit financial flows and corporate tax evasion/avoidance.

Moreover, there is real risk that new technologies and AI might exacerbate the existing inequalities within and between countries.

*The second crisis relates to conflicts*

The world is witnessing the largest numbers of conflicts since the Second World War. These conflicts are increasing the cost of living, resulting in loss of lives, destroying homes and public infrastructure, triggering forced displacement and causing environmental pollution.

Conflicts are on the rise despite the world military expenditure reaching about 2.9 trillion dollars in 2025. The investment in war economies is therefore not securing peace. Moreover, the Security Council is failing to meet its UN Charter's goal of maintaining peace and security in the world.

These conflicts are having a direct impact on the realisation of all human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals. The resources that should have been spent to end hunger, achieve gender equality or finance a just transition are being diverted to fuel conflicts.

*The third crisis is climate change*

Climate change poses an existential threat to humanity and planetary health generally. It impacts the realisation of all human rights, including the right to development.

Developing countries that are the least responsible for climate change are the most affected by it. The impact of climate change is also experienced disproportionately by groups such as children, women, Indigenous Peoples, older persons and persons with disabilities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

What role could the right to development play in overcoming these challenges and strengthening global governance? The right to development is a transformative human right. It is transformative because it challenges injustices – both historical during the colonial times and the current ones.

The right to development provides a roadmap to achieve holistic development – not merely economic development, but also social, political and cultural development – of every human person and all peoples. The right to development also demands creation of an international order which is fair and just for all countries.

Let me now illustrate how several elements of the right to development can address the crises of inequalities, conflicts and climate change.

First, the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development envisages a fair distribution of the benefits of economic development. States, multilateral development banks and companies should therefore ensure that development policies, programs and projects are addressing the root causes of structural inequalities.

Second, since the process of development matters, the right to development requires an active, free and meaningful participation of people in decision making. Participation is key to ensuring that development is both inclusive and sustainable. States should create enabling conditions such as access to information and civic space for people's participation. They should also work together to reform the international financial architecture.

Third, sustainability has been in-built in the right to development since the 1992 Rio Declaration, because the right must be fulfilled "so as to meet equitably developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations." In fact, any economic development which is not sustainable is not really development. At the same time, a transition towards a green economy cannot be just unless such transition integrates elements of the right to development such as intergerational equity and common but differentiated responsibilities.

Fourth, in line with the 1986 Declaration, States should pursue disarmament and spend the saved resources in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Since more weapons do not result in more peace, a course correction towards disarmament is a must to leave no one behind.

Fifth, right to development underscores the importance of international cooperation. North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation is essential to

overcome most of the current challenges, including inequalities, conflicts and climate change.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to constructive discussions at the Forum.