



General Assembly

Distr.: General
8 July 2021

Original: English

Human Rights Council

Forty-eighth session

13 September–1 October 2021

Agenda items 2 and 3

Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

One-day intersessional seminar of the Human Rights Council on the contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 41/19 and Council decision 45/113, provides a summary of the one-day intersessional seminar on the contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights held on 28 May 2021.

* The annex to the present report is reproduced as received, in the language of submission only.



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 41/19, the Human Rights Council requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to organize a one-day intersessional seminar, before the forty-seventh session of the Council, on the contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights in order to allow Member States, relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, international organizations, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs) and other stakeholders to identify challenges and gaps and share good practices and experiences in this field. The Council also requested the High Commissioner to prepare a summary report on the discussions held at the seminar for presentation to its forty-seventh session. In its decision 45/113, the Council decided that the seminar would be held before its forty-eighth session and that the summary report would be submitted at its forty-eighth session. The seminar was held on 28 May 2021.
2. The seminar included two panels as well as opening and closing segments. Opening remarks were made by the President of the Human Rights Council, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland, Chen Xu.
3. The first panel, a discussion of general perspectives on the contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights, was moderated by the Chief of the Development, Economic and Social Issues Branch, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Todd Howland. Speakers included: the Dean of the School of Law, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wang Xigen; the Director of the Division on Globalization and Development Strategies, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Richard Kozul-Wright; the Director of the Centre for Security, Strategy and Policy Research, University of Lahore, Rabia Akhtar; and Lecturer at the Department of Political Science, University of Buea, Hassan Njifon Njoya.
4. The second panel, on the contribution of development to the enjoyment of human rights in the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals and a better recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, was moderated by Jyoti Sanghera, an independent consultant and former Chief of the Human Rights and Economic and Social Issues Section, OHCHR. Speakers included: the Director of the Center for Sustainable Development, Columbia University, Jeffrey Sachs; the Director of the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, Sabina Alkire; Executive Director of Plataforma CIPÓ and member of the Committee for Development Policy, Adriana Abdenur; and the Chair of the Badrawi Foundation for Development, Hossam Badrawi.
5. Presentations by speakers at each panel were followed by interactive discussions involving representatives of Member States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Panellists replied to questions and comments raised from the floor and made concluding remarks. Closing remarks were presented by the Chief of the Right to Development Section of OHCHR, Ayuush Bat-Erdene.
6. The seminar was accessible for persons with disabilities and was webcast and recorded.¹

II. Opening of the seminar

7. In opening remarks, the President of the Human Rights Council² welcomed the convening of the seminar as a timely opportunity for the sharing of good practices and experiences and for identifying gaps and challenges in the contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights, a process that would better equip the Council to help all stakeholders in their efforts to build fairer, more resilient societies. The President made reference to Council resolutions 41/19 and 35/21, in which the Council recognized that

¹ See <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1c/k1cfyikyke>.

² <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=27144>.

“development and the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing”. To promote development, it was essential to create synergies and to establish regular channels of communication and exchange between the human rights, peace and security and development pillars of the United Nations. The President stressed that the Council could play a key role in providing Member States and the entities of the United Nations system with information and recommendations that contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by anchoring them firmly in human rights standards. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed how human rights – including the rights to health, an adequate standard of living and education – could be compromised without the contribution of development. As the world begins to move forward in the fight against COVID-19, all stakeholders must analyse the situation, exchange best practices and lessons learned and provide insights and actionable recommendations on how development could most effectively contribute to the enjoyment of human rights. The President provided the example of her country, Fiji, where development was essential to ensuring the full enjoyment of human rights for all in the context of slow and sudden onset natural disasters brought on by climate change. Such disasters, which threaten the enjoyment of the rights to adequate housing, safe drinking water and sanitation and cultural rights, among many others, could be mitigated through the implementation of effective planning and development policies.

8. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights³ pointed out that the contribution of development to ensuring freedom from want was clear. Sustainable and inclusive development were essential for promoting human rights, fundamental civic freedoms and gender equality. The High Commissioner expressed her conviction that human rights and sustainable development are interlocking and conjoined: implemented appropriately, the two are mutually reinforcing. True development generates greater social justice, not deeper exploitation; it reduces the harsh inequalities that threaten fundamental human rights, in particular the rights of the marginalized and poor. As such, it should be rooted in people-centred development of the people, by the people and for the people – also considering the needs of future generations and the health of the planet. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many economies, societies, communities and individuals to their knees, and climate change has advanced towards tipping points that could be irreversible. Extreme poverty and inequalities were continuing to grow, including inequalities between countries. The vaccine gap between wealthy and developing countries was a stark example of the depth of the divide. The High Commissioner stressed that it was crucial to put human rights at the centre of development and in all efforts to recover better from the pandemic. Action was needed on many fronts. Faced with collapsing trade, falling remittances, capital flight, currency depreciation and lack of sufficient international development assistance, poor countries are often forced to choose between providing basic services for their people and servicing their debt. Reduced fiscal and policy space has limited their ability to undertake investments that could fulfil the minimum, essential levels of rights that must be upheld at all times, including during times of crisis. She hoped that in the coming years development and human rights work would prioritize international development cooperation and solidarity; policies to fight poverty and inequality; and initiatives to close the digital gap and promote interconnectivity. She concluded her remarks by recalling that the development and human rights communities shared the same goals – to end discrimination and deprivation, to advance human dignity and human equality and to realize the well-being and rights of all people worldwide.

9. The Permanent Representative of China, Chen Xu,⁴ stated that development is the basis for and key to resolving the greatest problems in society and for creating the conditions for the full enjoyment of all human rights. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted nearly all aspects of people’s lives. Facing those challenges would require increased solidarity and cooperation in order to defeat the pandemic and restore social and economic development in countries throughout the world. Priority should be given to the rights to life and to health by ensuring the timely and equitable access to vaccines for people in developing countries. Mr. Chen called for the stepping-up of efforts to alleviate poverty and improve the standards of

³ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27125>.

⁴ www.china-un.ch/eng/dbtxwx/t1879641.htm.

living. Improving standards of living required the realization of the rights to food, education, adequate housing and decent work. Social equity and justice should be promoted and social protection should be strengthened to ensure that development outcomes are of benefit to all in an equitable manner. The distribution of benefits should go hand in hand with the protection of vulnerable groups and communities, including women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons. Efforts should be redoubled to combat racism, racial discrimination and hate speech. Strengthening international cooperation was the way to close the development gap. Necessary support should be provided to developing countries in order to safeguard their development expectations and their right to development. In addition, it is imperative that the world community act to protect the environment, tackle climate change and implement measures to encourage harmony with nature. Mr. Chen said that China was committed to promoting international cooperation, development for all and the universal enjoyment of all human rights. For the above reasons, China had been an original sponsor of Council resolution 41/19 on the contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights.

III. Panel I: General perspectives on the contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights

A. Contributions of panellists

10. Wang Xigen, the Dean of the School of Law, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, presented a study on the contribution of development to the enjoyment of human rights.⁵ The study was intended as a complement to the report of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee on the same topic.⁶ The study, which was informed by contributions from 32 Member States and other stakeholders,⁷ provided a historical overview of the evolution and normative basis of the concept of the contribution of development to the enjoyment of human rights. The interrelationship between development and human rights has been considered in many international instruments, from the Charter of the United Nations to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, leading to a broad normative basis that has contributed to a deeper understanding of the concept on the part of the international community. The study also reviewed challenges and achievements with regard to the contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights. Extreme poverty and growing inequality between rich and poor, as well as environmental problems, conflicts and diseases, constitute challenges to the contribution of development to human rights, seriously affecting their equitable enjoyment. The main cause of such intractable problems lay with unbalanced, inadequate and retrogressive development policymaking. Development should be understood as creating new resources and opportunities beyond the redistribution of existing resources. The study proposed a comprehensive understanding of the “contribution of development to the enjoyment of human rights”, involving a holistic idea of development that has as its subject the entire population and all individuals, equality of opportunities and a people-centred development approach, including to global justice. This concept should also adopt a development-based approach to human rights, interrelated with but distinct from a human rights-based approach to development, involving and emphasizing broad development criteria in human rights processes. The study concluded that development is the means as well as the objective for the realization of human rights and recommended that a development-based approach should be enhanced in all international human rights processes and mechanisms. At the domestic level, States should be encouraged and supported in their efforts to promote human rights through development. In developing countries in particular, the right to subsistence and the right to development are the most fundamental human rights. To that end, Professor Wang proposed an innovative, coordinated, green, open and shared development approach through the implementation of a “five-sphere integrated plan”. The

⁵ www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Development/seminar-contribution-development/1st-study/WangXigen.pdf.

⁶ A/HRC/41/50.

⁷ All contributions received are available at:

www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Development/Pages/contributionofdevelopment.aspx.

plan would be structured to promote a coordinated development of the economy, politics, culture, society and the environment, based on “equal opportunities for development”, and to establish a legal system for social justice consisting of equal opportunities, fair rules and equal rights and effective guarantees for all human rights, especially the right to development.

11. Richard Kozul-Wright, the Director of the UNCTAD Division on Globalization and Development Strategies, addressed the role of globalization and development strategies in promoting and protecting human rights. The Human Rights Council, in its resolution 41/19, highlighted the central dilemma of the role of the State in managing development and human rights policies. While human rights are universal and indivisible, development is largely a national project, particular and divisible, with distributional issues relating to priority-setting and trade-offs. In its resolution 41/19, the Council recognized that development and the realization of human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. However, as it was not clear what “mutually reinforcing” meant, in attempts to reconcile development and human rights, there had been a confusion, with development aligned with the provision of welfare, reducing the role of the State to that of providing a safety net against poverty, hunger, malnutrition and lack of access to education. These challenges were not the same as development. For those who advanced that perspective, the role of the State in terms of protecting human rights was essentially carried out through the promotion of good governance, transparency and the effective use of development assistance to meet welfare-based challenges. Under such circumstances, the State did not have a developmental role other than protecting property rights and promoting the rule of law, since development would be taken care of through globalization, free trade, free movement of capital and free enterprise. That approach to development would keep the State focused fully on human rights rather than on economic issues, and development would be considered to be almost automatic. However, this is not how successful economies developed over the last centuries nor in recent years. During the current COVID-19 pandemic, intellectual property rights had taken precedence over the right to health: vaccines had been made widely available in countries in the global North but not in countries in the global South, which could not produce nor gain access to a sufficient supply. Moreover, the fiscal space and capacity to create jobs has been lacking in developing countries during the crisis. The model of economic development of the last decades has not delivered an investment environment enabling the public goods necessary for the enjoyment of human rights. On the contrary, the model has exacerbated inequality, insecurity and high levels of indebtedness. This system was incompatible with human rights and with the need to address the looming climate crisis. Mr. Kozul-Wright argued for an alternative narrative to marry development, climate and human rights. This would correspond to a “global green new deal” to repair a social contract that has become frail, and would give States the policy and fiscal space to undertake development challenges and to forge a countervailing power to balance an international system that was very heavily biased in favour of the advanced economies. UNCTAD and OHCHR could cooperate in advancing thinking on how to advance the right to development and mutual challenges. The new model implies significant changes in the way the multilateral financial institutions work; those institutions have not been providing the kind of economic support that most developing countries need in order to achieve a sustainable development compatible with the human rights agenda.

12. Rabia Akhtar, Director of the Centre for Security, Strategy and Policy Research at the University of Lahore, Pakistan, made a presentation on the contribution of interconnectivity to the enjoyment of human rights based on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which had increased interconnectivity and regional integration, allowing Pakistani citizens to enjoy their basic human rights. Countries in the South Asia region were far from achieving the kind of integration achieved in Europe since the 1950s. The connectivity of Pakistan with the rest of the region is based on its location as a transit State at the crossroads of regional corridors for economic activity. Despite its common historical and cultural heritage, as a result of regional geopolitics, tariff and non-tariff barriers, weak infrastructure, poor awareness among stakeholders, lack of political will and low levels of investment, South Asia has remained one of the least integrated regions in the world. With the recent strengthening of democratic institutions and values, Pakistan was poised to become a centre of vibrant trade and economic activity, connecting China, South and Central Asia and the Middle East. Studies estimated that upcoming projects could create 575,000 direct jobs and over one million indirect jobs

once special economic zones are developed. Pakistan was still trying to discard its historical baggage of colonialism, especially where institutional influences and class structures were concerned, and the country had had a slow start in accumulating capital and building the productive capacity to alleviate poverty. The Economic Corridor has provided Pakistan with an opportunity to become an export-led economy, thereby contributing to its socioeconomic development over the long term. A joint working group on the socioeconomic development of the Economic Corridor would launch 27 projects in the fields of agriculture, health, education, drinking water supply, poverty alleviation and vocational and technical education. Ms. Akhtar believed that State processes for achieving development goals and respecting human rights obligations were mutually reinforcing, although not synonymous. A development model guided solely by the quest for improved economic growth above all else was not likely to contribute to improving human rights. Pakistan would only be able to deliver dividends on socioeconomic indicators by adopting a people-centred approach, placing the protection of the human rights and human needs of its citizens at the heart of building prosperity. The Government of Pakistan has launched massive socioeconomic reforms, including the Ehsaas Programme, introduced in 2019, which is aimed at addressing elite capture and making the Government work to create equality; safety nets for disadvantaged segments of the population; the development of human capital; and the creation of jobs and livelihoods. Better socioeconomic indicators, poverty alleviation and human capital development are key to the enjoyment of human rights through development. Ms. Akhtar stressed that interconnectivity in and of itself, on “autopilot” would not contribute to the enjoyment of human rights without a conscious and concerted effort to link human rights and development.

13. Hassan Njifon Njoya, lecturer in the Department of Political Science at the University of Buea, Cameroon, reported on the contribution of education and the elimination of the digital gap to the enjoyment of all human rights. Although human rights form an inseparable whole, the international community pays more attention to civil and political rights, to the detriment of economic, social and cultural rights. The staggering inequality gap between the world’s rich and poor was widening, and such social inequalities have had serious consequences on access to education and computer-based services. About 40 per cent of the world’s population is without access to the Internet. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the need to provide education on computers and the Internet, including making computers available for the majority of the world’s citizens, especially in developing countries. During the pandemic, many countries have enforced lockdowns and closed schools, and only individuals with access to the Internet have been able to continue their studies. For people in many countries in Africa, this has meant a temporary or permanent abandonment of education. Despite the fact that education has been established as a basic human right, 750 million people around the world cannot read and write. Illiterate people face numerous obstacles in terms of social insertion, including: reduced levels of knowledge and expertise; limited employment opportunities; low income levels; poor living conditions; lack of access to quality health care; and lack of opportunities for their children, which perpetuates intergenerational poverty. Education is a gateway to the enjoyment of all human rights, including better employment opportunities and access to basic social amenities. In the digital age, access to the Internet and the ability to effectively use it is intricately linked to daily social, economic and political life. The global digital gap is caused by poverty and creates more poverty. Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea and other countries in Africa have worked to ensure the distribution of laptops and the installation of Internet facilities at public universities. However, high costs have affected the sustainability of these projects: laptops are manufactured outside the continent and import costs are high. Mr. Njifon Njoya argued that education and the elimination of the digital gap were mutually reinforcing and paramount for the enjoyment of all human rights. A hungry man was not free from bondage and manipulation; an ignorant person was not free from exploitation. He encouraged States and other stakeholders to build computer and mobile telephone assembly plants in developing countries; to boost the energy sector to sustain industrial development; to strengthen the information technology infrastructure; to reinforce South-South and North-South cooperation to boost the transfer of knowledge and technology; and to educate and empower youth and support them through job creation.

B. Interactive discussion

14. Delegations delivering statements included: Australia, Germany, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives, Pakistan (on behalf of a group of countries), the Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). The delegation of the European Union also delivered a statement. A representative of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) took the floor. NGOs addressing the panel during the interactive dialogue included: All Win Network, Amity Foundation, China Soong Ching Ling Foundation, Mental Disability Rights International, and an independent consultant producing research for OHCHR. The following NGOs were unable to make statements owing to lack of time: ACDA, Aid Organization and China National Committee on Ageing.

15. Most participants emphasized the interrelationship and interdependence of all human rights. Many delegations focused their statements on the right to development as a universal and inalienable right. Some participants stressed that development should not be reduced to economic development – it must also include social, cultural, political and environmental dimensions. Some delegations and other participants considered that development was the basis for combating poverty – especially extreme poverty – strengthening social stability and improving prosperity for all. One delegation mentioned that development should contribute to enhancing productive capacities of countries. Other speakers argued that development should aim at ensuring equitable access to basic needs, thus contributing to human rights, including the rights to health care, education, food, water and sanitation, housing, social security and access to information and telecommunication technologies. Development should be guaranteed, in particular, to vulnerable populations, ethnic, religious and other minorities and persons with disabilities. Some delegations noted that development could lead to more harmonious societies free from prejudice and social barriers.

16. Delegations had different views on the interrelationship between development and human rights. Some argued that development was a requirement for human rights, especially in the global South. They emphasized the right to development as a collective right of nations and peoples. Other delegations argued that lack of development could not be used to exempt States from their human rights obligations. Some delegations also argued that the process of development should not overshadow the importance of human rights. One delegation expressed concerns about efforts that undermined the consensus on the interdependence between human rights and development.

17. Some delegations emphasized the primary responsibility of States to ensure the full realization of human rights to their own population and that States had the obligation to elaborate national development policies. Others believed more emphasis should be put on international cooperation and solidarity. For some speakers, aligning international development policies in ways that promote the realization of the right to development was the collective responsibility of the international community. One delegation argued that equality of opportunity for development is a prerogative both of nations and individuals. The interrelationship of all human rights should be taken into account not only by States domestically, but among States and international organizations and international financial institutions. Another delegation recalled that the relationship of the right to development and the right to self-determination was enshrined in the Declaration on the Right to Development, a right that was linked to a democratic and equitable international order in which all human rights may be fully realized.

18. Speakers addressed the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on development and human rights, with most emphasizing how it had aggravated global inequalities. Since the beginning of the pandemic, development had been brought to a standstill, and in some countries and territories it had been setback by decades. Developing countries were disproportionately affected, with the least developed countries and small island developing States being the worst impacted, with dire consequences for the fight against poverty. The pandemic had also led to rising levels of unemployment and public debt and the widespread downgrading of credit ratings. Countries dependent on tourism had suffered devastating, double-digit economic contractions. Some delegations argued that the pandemic had also exposed inadequacies in international cooperation, citing as evidence the disparity of vaccine

distribution among States. Some delegations mentioned that, as a result of the pandemic, their priority areas for international cooperation were health, security, economic recovery and protecting those in the most vulnerable situations.

19. Delegations shared examples of good practices relating to the contribution of development to human rights, including successful national policies for poverty alleviation, including: free schooling, free education, free universal health care, access to safe drinking water, sanitation, universal electrification and increased access to adequate housing. Others mentioned commitments to the achievement of sustainable and inclusive development and to the promotion of the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights without discrimination. Delegations from developed countries noted their commitments for achieving the collective target of providing 0.7 per cent of their gross national income (GNI) as official development assistance to developing countries by 2030. Assistance was also provided to strengthen the rule of law and to promote equitable globalization, stability, prosperity and resilience.

20. Other participants shared examples of good practices. ITU, for example, mentioned that it had made significant efforts to ensure that the youth perspective was incorporated into its work programmes, management approaches and human resource development activities. One CSO mentioned projects with participative and bottom-up approaches, ensuring that the rights and priorities of targeted groups were articulated, respected and protected. It also mentioned that, with the rapid rise of online fundraising, CSOs were directly engaging in South-South cooperation with countries in different continents for the eradication of poverty and the promotion of access to water, education and health in the light of the Sustainable Development Goals. Another speaker shared the example of programmes for investing in the education of children from low-income families, with the aim of breaking the cycle of poverty.

21. Delegations argued that the international community should cooperate by identifying and removing obstacles to development that impacted the enjoyment of human rights. Obstacles mentioned by some delegations included unilateral coercive measures, trade wars, foreign occupation, military intervention, restrictions to policy space and the imposition of foreign values and models of development and politics that ignored particular national conditions. Some considered climate change the biggest threat to the sustainable development of many countries, especially small island developing States.

22. Participants made recommendations to States relating to promoting transformative technologies, enhancing connectivity and ensuring access to housing, health care, education and other rights. One delegation recommended the adoption of a human rights-based approach to development, including in the pursuit of a green transition. Another delegation recommended that policies to reduce poverty should reach all people affected by poverty equally and the furthest behind first. Other recommendations related to international cooperation: some argued that poverty eradication should be the top priority of the international community, while another delegation favoured international cooperation for the development of the productive capacities of peoples from the global South, allowing them to improve their quality of life and well-being. Participants called for ambitious international climate change adaptation and mitigation measures and increased climate financing. Some were in favour of reforming the global financial architecture. Other delegations argued that international cooperation must be built on principles of respect for national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States and the right of States to their development models. One speaker stated that international development assistance should respect the principle of the effective use of resources and should also take into account the human rights of persons with disabilities.

23. One delegation asked panellists how the international community could provide: (a) better support to States seeking debt relief; and (b) financial stimulus to overcome the negative effects of the pandemic on development and the enjoyment of human rights. One participant inquired about meaningful connectivity that could help promote the realization of development as a human right.

C. Concluding remarks by panellists

24. Mr. Kozul-Wright emphasized that, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, most developing countries were not on course to meet the Sustainable Development Goals due to slowing economies, austerity and restrictive intellectual property rules, as well as the fact that high percentages of their workforces were employed in the informal economy. To meet the Goals, the least developed countries either needed to grow by over 10 per cent annually or to accumulate levels of indebtedness of at least 150 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP). Such conditions were not feasible over the next 10 years. Serious structural underpinnings and weaknesses of developing economies had to be tackled if the Goals were to be attained. The debt burden of developing countries required a sovereign international work-out mechanism that was participative and independent of creditors such as the International Monetary Fund. Given its magnitude, the debt suspension organized by the Group of 20 did not solve the debt problem for the developing nor for the least developed countries.

25. Ms. Akhtar agreed with the need for debt relief for developing countries. The full economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic could not, as yet, be calculated, and it was impossible for developing countries to redirect resources from other sectors towards the health sector because they were already overstretched and faced structural constraints. She emphasized the importance of treating digital connectivity and digital rights as fundamental human rights and expressed concern about the lack of information on COVID-19 vaccines and access to treatment of populations, as well as about Internet shutdowns in conflict zones and territories under foreign occupation.

26. Mr. Njifon Njoya said that South-South cooperation could contribute to the development of universities and the educational sector in countries in Africa and developing countries in other regions. He also emphasized that the elimination of the digital gap was key to promoting education for all.

27. Mr. Wang pointed out that human rights and development were mutually reinforcing and should receive equal attention. Development not only helped to ensure that human rights could be enjoyed in an equitable way, it also helped to expand such rights. Development should be understood as inclusive and sustainable development that contributes to ensuring economic, social and cultural rights, civil and political rights, the right to peace, the right to a healthy environment and the right to development, including support for digital rights, although digital rights do not provide all that is necessary for the enjoyment of human rights. For most people in the world, the elimination of poverty is the most important human right and is also recognized as the primary Sustainable Development Goal. Mr. Wang closed his remarks by noting that it was time to overcome differences and to concentrate on policies and formulating legal instruments to better protect the right to development of all peoples.

IV. Panel II: Contribution of development to the enjoyment of human rights in the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals and a better recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic

A. Contributions of panellists

28. Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Center for Sustainable Development of Columbia University, spoke about addressing inequalities in the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals. He emphasized that economic rights are part of human rights, although in some countries, such as the United States of America, human rights are typically understood to be civil and political rights only. From the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and the four freedoms proposed by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1941, economic rights have been clearly understood as a core of human rights. Everyone has the right to a life of dignity, including social protection, access to shelter, health care, education and nutrition. Those rights and other economic rights were further elaborated in

international human rights law covenants and treaties. The 75th anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 2023 will provide an opportunity to promote the understanding that economic rights are a fundamental component of human rights. Mr. Sachs argued that the Sustainable Development Goals are the attempt on the part of the current generation to realize the economic rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with an update to include the right to a safe environment. The full enjoyment of economic rights is not yet a reality in developed countries, nor do rich countries do enough to contribute to the progressive realization of those rights in poor countries. When the Universal Declaration was adopted, it was reasonable to expect that economic rights would be realized over time. It was a shame and a tragedy that 73 years later, the basic right to freedom from want is not enjoyed by many, especially since the world has become indescribably rich, on average, but indescribably divided and unequal in the application of that wealth. In 2021, 2,755 individuals had \$13.1 trillion in net worth, a volume of resources that could enable billions of people to enjoy their economic rights. He argued that this inequality is the most basic violation of fundamental human rights. Economic rights are in and of themselves fundamental for survival (highlighted especially during the COVID-19 pandemic), as millions of people die of poverty, lack of nutrition or lack of access to the most rudimentary health care. Economic rights are also instrumentally pathways to achieving the other human rights. Poor people are less capable of defending their civil, political, social and cultural rights. In this sense, he argued, the contribution of development to the enjoyment of human rights is fundamental. There is no alternative: it would be impossible to achieve other human rights if economic rights are not realized. He concluded by saying that the world has the wealth and technology to achieve all of the Sustainable Development Goals with ease, but that neglect, discrimination, lack of empathy and flagrant human rights abuses are blocking progress. The decade of action requires serious work that looks at the potential wealth, financing and technology available for the application of human rights law and ethics to achieve the Goals by 2030.

29. Sabina Alkire, Director of the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, discussed the contribution of poverty alleviation efforts to the enjoyment of human rights. She explained that understanding poverty implied addressing the situation of people whose rights have been violated, who are furthest behind, and whose circumstances must form part of all development efforts. She addressed overlaps between the human rights agenda and the agenda to reduce poverty in all its forms, as well as monetary poverty and other deprivations, including malnutrition, poor housing, lack of education, lack of decent work and the inability to participate in society. Most people who face violations of one right face violations of multiple rights and deprivations at the same time. Such deprivations often overlap with deprivations in terms of multidimensional poverty. Presenting a series of 10 poverty-related indicators measured for a total of 5.9 billion people, Ms. Alkire illustrated the interrelated nature of the indicators. For example, from the 922 million people deprived of electricity, 99.8 per cent experienced at least one other deprivation at the same time. Similarly, 99 per cent of the 1.3 billion people who were identified as multidimensionally poor overall suffered at least three forms of deprivation and 82 per cent experienced at least five forms of deprivation. From such results it is evident that to reduce poverty it is necessary to address multiple interconnected and interlocked deprivations, using multisectoral and integrated policies. By reducing one single number of a multidimensional poverty measure, a number of interconnected and interlinked violations of different rights can also be reduced. Measuring human rights-related indicators at the individual level was challenging as traditional poverty indicators are measured at the household level. Ms. Alkire questioned whether it would be meaningful to disaggregate by gender either the \$1.90 a day measure or the global multidimensional poverty index. To tackle the gender question in multidimensional poverty, she shared new techniques for disaggregating certain deprivations at the individual level, for example, disaggregating the number of children who are undernourished or that do not go to school in order to identify: (a) how many are girls and how many are boys, (b) how many have siblings that do not suffer the same deprivations, (c) how many are multidimensionally poor and (d) what additional deprivations they experience. She argued that understanding the lived multidimensional environment of people whose rights are violated would guide better and more specific policy responses. Understanding individual deprivations enriched by more information on other indicators would help contextualize their specific areas of fragility and strength. Ms. Alkire considered it inadequate

to address each human right separately as they were interlinked. She concluded by stating that the language of human rights could help to overcome apathy and neglect in the fight against poverty, including through the identification of rights-holders and duty-bearers and the reactivation of the commitment and compassion to frame human rights through a more positive language that mobilizes leadership, justice and collective action.

30. Adriana Abdenur, Executive Director of Plataforma CIPÓ and member of the Committee for Development Policy, spoke about the contribution of international development cooperation to the enjoyment of human rights. International development cooperation was essential to human rights even as the definition of development continued to change from economic growth to more people-centred, multidimensional, social, sustainable and inclusive development. Much of the development discourse since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic related to “reconstruction”, not to an old reality but towards a more just order. The pandemic and other global challenges had shed light on the need to recalibrate international development cooperation in view of the right to development. Development could not be divorced from climate change, technological innovation and associated risks nor from the expected steep demographic decline. Bridging the massive gap in commitments made to support developing countries with adaptation responses to climate change was a vital component of development cooperation. Socioecological crises, including in the Amazon basin, had strong links to international trade and investments through their connection to the relentless demand for commodities. Cleaning up global supply chains required concerted efforts by States and actors in the private sector and civil society. The focus of development cooperation should not be on expanding influence abroad, but rather on enabling populations worldwide to lead dignified lives and to fulfil their potential in sustainable ways across generations. Realizing the right to development implied meeting quantitative development cooperation commitments and qualitative changes. Greater accountability and transparency were needed across all modalities of development cooperation. The relationship between donors and recipients should be adjusted to address issues beyond the effectiveness of aid and greater emphasis should be placed on national ownership. Many rich countries continued to export their polluting practices, rapacious business methods, conflicts, arms and corrupt behaviours. Despite being on the rise, South-South cooperation was often manifested strictly through State-to-State relations, whereas the right to development required people-centred solidarity and collective understanding of human rights. While large-scale infrastructure projects through South-South cooperation helped to fill massive gaps, if poorly designed and/or implemented without participatory mechanisms, they tended to lead to displacement, social exclusion and environmental degradation. Coordinated efforts to address the extreme debt burden of developing countries were prerequisites in order to ensure that their populations would not be prevented from achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Upgrading international development cooperation in the light of the right to development required boosting the cooperation architecture, which was split between the United Nations development pillar, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the emerging governance space around South-South cooperation, including the Belt and Road Initiative. The High-level political forum on sustainable development and the Office for South-South Cooperation should be strengthened to promote development cooperation policies suited to the right to development. More dialogue channels should be created between human rights mechanisms, the high-level political forum for sustainable development, the Office for South-South Cooperation and the human rights architecture. The right to development required real changes to the discourse, practice and architecture of development cooperation. Ms. Abdenur concluded by stating that the right to development provided the chance to build a more equitable and just world than the one that existed in the pre-pandemic order, including through effective, people-centred development cooperation.

31. Hossam Badrawi, Chair of the Badrawi Foundation for Development, focused on the challenges to securing the human right to health in pandemic situations. He emphasized that human rights are interrelated and interconnected. The right to education, the right to health and the Sustainable Development Goals were mutually reinforcing. Three rights were most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic: the right to life, the right to health, and the right to freedom of movement as a result of the measures imposed to stop the spread of the pandemic. Handwashing, wearing masks and physical distancing seemed to be simple measures, but

many people faced immense challenges in adopting them, especially the over 2.2 billion people without access to clean water and the 1.8 billion people who are homeless or living in inadequate or overcrowded places. The pandemic showed that no nation could act alone and that all countries were interconnected in terms of their enjoyment of human rights. If a small community within a country or a single country was affected, all others would also be affected. Therefore, responses should be coordinated and global. Mr. Badrawi argued that the Internet and communication technologies had become a right for everyone in order to ensure access to information. He hoped that, after the pandemic, all stakeholders would assume their responsibility to work towards the realization of all rights and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The recipe for achieving this was clear and there was no excuse for the violation of human rights anywhere. No country could overcome challenges alone – the whole world should act together. Despite disagreements over the pace of globalization, Mr. Badrawi believed that it should be stepped up: the pandemic had imposed outstanding economic burdens and only through mutual cooperation would it be possible to ensure health care, vaccines, treatment and tests for everyone. In particular, health-care workers should be protected. Some countries had taken advantage of the emergency situation to have more control over their people and their freedom of movement. In the long struggle against the effects of the pandemic, the tasks facing the global community were immense, both in the field of health care and also for the achievement of the Goals. Mr. Badrawi emphasized that good governance was fundamental to the provision of the right to health. Protection of the right to live in a healthy way, with availability of food, medicines and health care as part of global action, would be a major challenge. This should be based on the right to education and other economic rights and should include the elimination of poverty. Human rights should be ensured to all, without discrimination. The vulnerability in the field of health care that COVID-19 has revealed in countries worldwide should serve as a motivation to work together.

B. Interactive discussion

32. Delegations delivering statements included Argentina, Germany, Iran (the Islamic Republic of), Malaysia, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. CSOs taking the floor included: Around The Same World – Xi Anu Nation of Xi-Amurru-ka de Dugdahmoundyah; China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation; China Society for Human Rights Studies; Chongqing Centre for Equal Social Development; Ecospirituality Foundation; Fundación Abba Colombia; Génération Maastricht; International Association of Justice Watch; International Human Rights Council; Kalyani Mahavidyalaya; United Nations Association of China; and World Circle of the Consensus: Self-Sustaining People, Organizations and Communities.

33. Some delegations focused their statements on how development has contributed to human rights and on the right to development as a fundamental human right. They considered that the right to development provided the basis for equitable and inclusive development to ensure that all citizens benefit from the growth and development of countries. Other delegations underscored the human rights-based approach to development as the only way to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. One delegation cautioned that development could not be put ahead of human rights, and that there were real dangers in trying to attempt to change the primary obligation of States to respect individual rights. Another reiterated the importance of respecting the principles of State sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs. Delegations and civil society participants defended the importance of protecting the rights of marginalized groups and minorities, including older persons, children, migrants and indigenous peoples.

34. Some CSOs argued that development was the basis for the improvement of living standards and the welfare of the population, which contributed to the enjoyment of human rights by ensuring the subsistence of communities and alleviating or eradicating poverty. One organization argued that, in the interest of inclusive development and solidarity, individual human rights could be restricted, for example the imposition of mask wearing in public. Some participants noted that a narrow perspective of development informed by consumerism could be harmful to the environment by causing more air and water pollution and the displacement

of local communities and indigenous peoples. One organization emphasized that the philosophical contributions of indigenous peoples that live in harmony with their environment informed models of sustainability for people and the planet.

35. Delegations noted that the COVID-19 pandemic had aggravated pre-existing social and economic crises, affected vulnerable populations and caused a sharp increase in poverty levels in many regions. They argued for the promotion of fair and equitable access to safe, affordable and effective vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics against COVID-19. One participant mentioned older persons as a group that had been especially impacted during the pandemic and which required specific measures to make sure that they were not left behind.

36. Some delegations and participants stated that the negative impacts of unilateral coercive measures on development and human rights had been aggravated during the pandemic. Participants noted that the refusal of some countries to cooperate constructively to overcome the pandemic had caused a vaccine gap, which was a catastrophic moral failure that had negatively affected the capacity of developing countries to overcome the pandemic. One speaker mentioned institutional harassment at various levels as another obstacle to development and human rights.

37. Delegations shared good practices relating to the adoption of evidence-based policies and plans against hunger, programmes for the promotion of employment and policies for cushioning the impacts of the pandemic and paving a path towards economic recovery and development. One participant shared the positive impacts, especially for older persons, of the rapid setting up of large emergency hospital facilities dedicated to people with COVID-19. Delegations shared good practices relating to international cooperation and solidarity, notably: the active support of States for the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility; bilateral donations of vaccines; and support to other international efforts to increase vaccine production in the global South. CSOs shared grassroots-led multistakeholder resource mobilization initiatives to fight the pandemic domestically and through South-South cooperation, including through the donation of medical supplies. One participant shared the example of initiatives led by indigenous children and youth to raise awareness about the decade of action for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Some organizations reported on projects to promote sustainable development, fight poverty, combat hunger, promote the right to health, quality education, leisure, decent work, gender equality and access to clean water, sanitation and the Internet. Some projects involved children and youth, indigenous peoples, migrants, rural communities, people affected by armed conflicts and women affected by poverty.

38. Delegations made recommendations for stronger regional and international cooperation and solidarity for collective actions and the exchange of best practices on initiatives that advance sustainable development, human rights and a better recovery from COVID-19. Delegations recommended international cooperation to accelerate inclusive digitalization and to promote: a skilled workforce, quality foreign direct investments, debt relief, the removal of unilateral coercive measures; the reduction of tariff and non-tariff trade barriers, better policies on sexual and reproductive health and rights, democracy, gender equality, the rule of law, and the strengthening of environmental, social and governance principles. One delegation supported the proposal for a pandemic treaty in order to build reliable and sustainable structures for future pandemic preparedness and response, arguing that strengthening international health regulations in a verifiable manner with full transparency regarding health threats must be at the core of this endeavour. One participant argued that older persons should be more highly valued and protected at the national and international levels. Speakers proposed the increased participation of grassroots organizations in promoting and protecting human rights. One speaker proposed the adoption of tested methodologies to address institutional harassment as a strategy to build more resilience for disasters and to promote sustainable development. One delegate emphasized the importance of the exercise of human rights and environmental due diligence by businesses in accordance with international standards.

39. One delegation asked panellists how Member States and the United Nations human rights machinery could better advocate for human rights-aligned development.

C. Concluding remarks by panellists

40. Mr. Badrawi noted that all participants in the seminar agreed on principles and on their desire to engage in more sustainable action during the post-COVID-19 period. Unified global action would help overcome all violations of human rights, which were interconnected. Mr. Badrawi considered the seminar to be a landmark event and an inspiration for future actions.

41. Ms. Abdenur noted the South-North divide within the Human Rights Council during the vote on resolution 41/19, with 33 developing countries in favour, 13 rich countries against and no abstentions. Ms. Abdenur expressed a realistic optimism that a compromise position could be achieved by exploring the interdependence between human rights and development and through prospective action for the operationalization of development along with the protection of civil liberties and the rule of law. The creation of groups of friends among States could create champions to reach across the chasm and a road map to bridge the divide. Failures of international cooperation during the COVID-19 pandemic had made clear the imperative need to set aside geopolitical rivalries in the debate on the right to development and to grasp the opportunity to develop an architecture and a set of practices relating to international development cooperation that ensures progress on all human rights.

42. Ms. Sabina Alkire noticed that the heaviest weight of the COVID-19 pandemic had fallen upon the poor and on those people suffering from multiple deprivations of human rights violations. Data analyses of poverty, human rights and development could be strengthened in the pandemic and post-pandemic periods by using data disaggregated by rural-urban areas, subnational regions and age, as well as ethnic groups, disability status and gender. This disaggregation, which is already available using pre-COVID data, would allow for the better identification of vulnerable population groups. Information on the post-pandemic configuration of poverty and deprivation requires policies to improve the quality, consistency and availability of data on malnutrition, child mortality and other indicators that are vitally important but missing from most rapid remote surveys. Developing rapid data sources that include data on education, work, health and living standards that are frequently updated was a top priority. The collection of information for the compilation of rapid data sources was made possible as a result of breakthroughs made during the pandemic in terms of remote data gathering and the merging of data with administrative records, including appropriate privacy safeguards. Resource constraints would require enhanced efficiency and effectiveness. Multidimensional metrics, regularly updated, could provide a key management tool to make this period a historic inflexion point in the fight against poverty.

V. Closing remarks

43. The Chief of the Right to Development Section of OHCHR stated that most speakers had underscored the relevance of development in realizing human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular in the context of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Several speakers pointed out the importance of human rights-based approach to development. International solidarity and cooperation, including South-South cooperation, were important in making sure that development contributed to the enjoyment of all human rights, including the right to development everywhere and for all, without discrimination, and to the promise to leave no one behind. It was fundamental to recalibrate strategies and analysis, given the tectonic shifts imposed by the pandemic and other crises, such as the climate crisis. Speakers pointed to several areas in which development could contribute to human rights, including: equality; justice and non-discrimination; economic, social and cultural rights; the eradication of poverty; gender equality; digital connectivity; environmental protection; fighting climate change; debt relief; physical connectivity, roads and infrastructure; science-based policies, disaggregation of data; and the collection of information, including quality and accessibility. Overcoming geopolitical rivalries and disagreements and addressing extreme inequalities that left millions living on the fringes of the global community was a moral responsibility and a human rights imperative.

Annex

List of participants

States members of the Human Rights Council

Argentina, Armenia, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Czechia, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nepal, Pakistan, Poland, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Somalia, Togo, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

States Members of the United Nations

Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Australia, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Cambodia, Chile, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lithuania, Malaysia, Maldives, Nauru, Portugal, Qatar, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand.

Non-member States represented by observers

State of Palestine.

United Nations

International Telecommunication Union, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

United Nations human rights mechanisms

Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development.

Intergovernmental organizations

European Union, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, South Centre.

National human rights institutions

Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of Azerbaijan.

Non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

ABC Tamil Oli, Action on Smoking and Health, African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies, Aid Organization, All Win Network, Alliance Vita, American Indian Law Alliance, Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain Inc., Amity Foundation, Apostolic Ministerial International Network, Asociacion Cubana de las Naciones Unidas (Cuban United Nations Association), Association canadienne pour le droit et la vérité, Association Congolaise pour le développement agricole, Association Internationale pour l'égalité des femmes, Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII, Beijing Changier Education Foundation, Better World Campaign, Centre for Convention on Democratic Integrity, Canadian Centre on Disability Studies, Children's Human Rights Centre of Albania, China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation, China NGO Network for International Exchanges, China Society for Human Rights Studies, China Soong Ching Ling Foundation, Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Comisión Unidos Vs Trata, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Dianova International, DRCNet Foundation, Ecospirituality Foundation, Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans, Federal Union of European Nationalities, Fondation pour un centre pour le développement socio-économique, Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture, Fundación Abba Colombia, Fundación para la Democracia Internacional, Genève pour les droits de l'homme: formation internationale, Global Institute for Water, Environment and Health, Global Migration Policy Associates, Global Welfare Association, Green and Better World, IBON International Foundation Inc., Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Loreto

Generalate, Instituto de Desenvolvimento e Direitos Humanos, International Accountability Project, International Association of Charities, International Association of Justice Watch, International Association of Universities, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, International Federation on Ageing, International Human Rights Association of American Minorities, International Human Rights Council, International Institute for Sustainable Development and Research, International Movement ATD Fourth World, International Network of Liberal Women, International Organization for the Right to Education and Freedom of Education, International Police Executive Symposium, International Prison Chaplains' Association, Development Iraq Organization, Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice delle Salesiane di Don Bosco, iuventum e.V., Japan Federation of Bar Associations, Jesuit Refugee Service, Latter-Day Saint Charities, Maasai Aid Association, Make Mothers Matter, Mental Disability Rights International, No borders humanity organization, Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, Pan Pacific and South-East Asia Women's Association, Peace Boat, Prahar, Project 1948 Foundation, Public Organization "Public Advocacy", Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Réseau unité pour le développement de Mauritanie, Servitas Cameroon, Sikh Human Rights Group, Sociedade Filantropica Maria de Nazaré, Soroptimist International of Europe, Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers Institute, Stichting Basug (Bangladesh Support Group), Stichting Chinese Initiative on International Law, Equal Rights Trust, Geneva Consensus Foundation, United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society, United Nations Association of China, US Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, Village Suisse ONG, Women and Development Association in Alexandria, Word of Life Christian Fellowship, World Association for the School as an Instrument of Peace, World Circle of the Consensus: Self-Sustaining People, Organizations and Communities, World Organization for Early Childhood Education, World Organization of the Scout Movement, Youth with a Mission.

Others

ACDA, Aix-Marseille University, Arab Centre for the Independence of the Judiciary and the Legal Profession, Around The Same World – Xi Anu Nation of Xi-Amurru-ka de Dugdahmoundyah, CCLPWorldwide – Uneduch, China Central Television, China National Committee on Ageing, China Radio International, Chongqing Centre for Equal Social Development, Committee for Justice, Génération Maastricht, School of Law of Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Institut de hautes études internationales et du développement, Instituto CEU Estrela Guia – CEU Pela Vida, Instituto Jones dos Santos Neves, Instituto Superior de Economia e Gestão – Universidade de Lisboa, International Association for Human Rights Advocacy in Geneva, International Human Rights Defenders Foundation, Islamic Human Rights Commission, Justice Access Point, Kalyani Mahavidyalaya, Koga and Partners Law Firm, Lakhimpur College of Veterinary Science, LLC Baykal777 & Ukrainian choice – the Right of the people, Nada network for the defense of children's rights, Nigerian Medical Association, People's Daily, Prince of Songkla University, Swiss Federal Office for National Economic Supply, Time4Haiti, United Nations World Peace Association, United Nations Peace Keeping Forces Council for South-East Asia, Universal Association of Professional Colleges and Universities, Universal Institute of Professional Management, Universidade do Oeste de Santa Catarina, Universidade Federal de Goiás, Universidade Federal de Uberlândia, Université de Genève, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, University for Peace, University of Antwerp, University of Pennsylvania.
