



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

Nineteenth session

Agenda item 3

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

**Joint written statement\* submitted by Caritas Internationalis (International Confederation of Catholic Charities), the New Humanity, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status, the Association Points-Coeur, the Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII, the Dominicans for Justice and Peace - Order of Preachers, the International Catholic Child Bureau, the International Organization for the Right to Education and Freedom of Education (OIDEI), the International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education and Development – VIDES, the Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice delle Salesiane di Don Bosco, the Fondazione Marista per la Solidarietà Internazionale, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[13 February 2012]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

## **Right to development: from rhetoric to action\*\***

The Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23), Caritas Internationalis (International Confederation of Catholic Charities), New Humanity, Association Points-Coeur, Dominicans for Justice and Peace (Order of Preachers), International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE), International Organization for the Right to Education and Freedom of Education (OIDE), International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education and Development (VIDES), Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice (IIMA), and Marist International Solidarity Foundation (FMSI) welcome the report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Right to Development on its twelfth session as well as the report of the Secretary General and High Commissioner for Human Rights on the same topic and the summary of the Panel discussion “The way forward in the realisation of the Right to Development: between policy and practice”.

Having participated actively in the 12<sup>th</sup> session of the Open-ended Working Group, the co-signatories would like to comment particularly on the work of the High Level Task Force on the criteria and operational sub-criteria for the implementation of the Right to Development reflected in the document A/HRC/15/WG.2/TF/2/Add.2.

The Declaration on the Right to Development is based on the following principles: unity of origin and a shared destiny of the human family; equality among all persons and communities based on human dignity; the universal destination of the goods of the earth; the notion of integral development; and the centrality of the human person and solidarity.

The co-signing NGOs support the approach of the Task Force to promote a comprehensive human-centred development that implies the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights as well as the relevance, not only of development outcomes, but also of the development realization process and of its sustainability.

Nevertheless, the attempt to summarise the Right to Development with the core norm described in the above-mentioned document defining the right to Development as “the right of peoples and individuals to the constant improvement of their well being and to a national and international enabling environment conducive to just, equitable, participatory and human centred development respectful of all human rights”, and the table provided, listing the attributes, criteria, sub-criteria and indicators, do not entirely reflect the peculiarity, the richness, and the vision of the right to development.

Furthermore, the concept of an enabling environment at national and global levels should be spelt out in greater detail and the national and international responsibilities should be better balanced.

It is fundamental that all States recognize the complementarity of the national and the international levels of the Right to Development. It is impossible to think that a state, on its own, especially if belonging to the least developed countries, can completely fulfil this right for its citizens. In fact, when other countries are not able to achieve this fundamental goal or when the international environment is hostile to its fulfilment, the international community should be called to act as required by the Millennium Development Goal 8, which aims at developing a “global partnership for development.” It is a duty of cooperation based on articles 55 and 56 of the United Nations Charter.

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\*\* The Edmund Rice International, an NGO without consultative status, also shares the views expressed in this statement.

Even if it remains a primary responsibility of a State to guarantee, within its own possibilities, the realization of the Right to Development to its citizens, and to remove obstacles to development due to the violation of human rights, the international community must support the development process, especially in the poorest countries and remove the structural economic, financial and political obstacles that exist at the international level.

There is no single model of development. It is up to all peoples and States, given their cultural and historical specificities, to choose the economic, political and social systems in which they want to live, work, and realize their full creative potential.

International solidarity and cooperation represent a shared responsibility of States to create the conditions that are necessary to make that right a reality.

In this context the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity are particularly relevant. Solidarity and subsidiarity can be viewed as complementary. While the former relates to the mobilization of financial and human resources for development and to fairness and sustainability in international relations, the latter helps to identify the most appropriate level of decision-making and intervention. The principle of subsidiarity, therefore, can be seen as a cross-cutting criterion for the creation of an enabling environment to facilitate fulfilment of the right to development and as the dividing line between national and international responsibilities.

The criteria and operational sub-criteria proposed in the above-cited document are lacking appropriate human rights language and focus more on the agenda of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): “food security” is mentioned rather than “the right to food”, “health” rather than “right to health” etc.

The co-signing NGOs believe that the concept of development proposed by the Task Force has been limited to its social and economic dimensions. However, the declaration of the Right to Development, in article 1, presents a broader definition of development – one that includes cultural and political development as well as the realisation of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The same comprehensive concept of development was agreed upon at the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, one that, in fact, include political, economic, cultural, ethical and spiritual dimensions. Development of individuals and peoples encompasses all aspects of human life, including such spiritual and religious dimensions.

These qualitative dimensions should be reflected among the human-centred criteria of this right that are being elaborated by the Task Force.

Furthermore, education is a key component for the implementation of the right to development, in all its aspects. Special attention should be given to it. In fact, the improvement of education worldwide exerts a positive impact on key factors for development and well-being. Education is an engine for social development since it promotes, inter alia, social mobility, citizenship building, social identity, and strengthening of social cohesion. At the same time, education expands the availability of work and the ability of individuals to secure an income to support themselves and their families, and promotes economic development that positively impacts on poverty reduction, productivity, sustainable agriculture, as well as integration and full participation of individuals in the global economy.

Since the criteria and sub-criteria should reflect the entirety of the Declaration on the Right to Development, the preamble of the declaration and its spirit also should be reflected in the criteria and sub-criteria. In this regard, the principle of international solidarity and the right to self determination of peoples presently are lacking in the table which groups together the criteria and operational sub-criteria, while the preamble of the Declaration itself clearly includes these principles.

The experience in the field of the co-signing NGOs, shows that the implementation of the right to development is successful if centred on the human person and on human communities, as the Declaration on the Right to Development states, and these should be the active participants and beneficiaries of this right.

The network of educational and health-care institutions and humanitarian assistance agencies, for instance, including those sponsored by faith-based organizations and benefiting mainly the poorest people of the world, proves to be a motor of change and empowerment principally because it focuses directly on the human person and is guided by an understanding of sustainable development that keeps a balanced relationship between the needs of individual persons and the communities they belong to and between people and the environment.

Thus, the co-signatories believe that an inclusive approach will take into account both "sound economic policies that foster growth with equity" and the priority that should be accorded to the human person as well as to human dignity and aspirations.

For the implementation of the Right to Development the first obstacle that urgently needs to be removed is the actual polarisation and politicisation of the debate that has emerged so clearly in the dynamics of the 12<sup>th</sup> session of the intergovernmental working group.

Today, the world is experiencing a historical period characterized not only by multiple crises but also by increased participation of peoples and entire nations that claim the recognition of human rights, freedom and democracy. It is a period of opportunities that should be seized for the very survival of humanity.

The time has come for Member States of different coalitions to go from rhetoric to action bearing in mind that the life, well-being and respect for the human rights of billions of people around the world, depend on the implementation of the right to development and the establishment of an international social order (see article 28 of the UDHR) founded on justice, development and peace.

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