

International community must act now and together to prevent development setback, say experts

GENEVA (3 December 2020) – *It is critically important for States to strengthen and renew their commitment to multilateralism to defeat the COVID-19 pandemic and to address the development setback in its aftermath, say human rights experts* in a statement marking the 34th anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development. Their full statement is as follows:*

“The COVID -19 pandemic swept across the globe, affecting the North and the South, urban and rural communities, taking a heavy toll on lives and livelihoods. Lives are lost, healthcare systems are stretched to their limits, education opportunities have disappeared, businesses have closed. Human and economic developments have been impaired in every aspect and the health crisis is far from over. The world is facing a truly global challenge – and a fragmented approach to dealing with the virus has proved inadequate and harmful to health and economies alike, as well as development and enjoyment of human rights. Defeating the pandemic in a single country is only the beginning of a solution. Recovery can only be efficient if all states work together in a spirit of true multilateralism.

We must remember that according to the Charter of the United Nations, one of the purposes of international cooperation is solving international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems. Yet, major multilateral organisations such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization have been weakened and ignored in the recent years.

While scientists are working around the clock to develop vaccines and effective treatments, governments must work in solidarity to ensure a coordinated equitable response, so that any COVID-19 vaccine and treatment become widely available, accessible and affordable to all, to provide assistance where it is most needed and to plan for a recovery in a manner that takes care of the needs of the least developed countries and the most vulnerable populations. States must cooperate in a spirit of strengthened and renewed multilateralism, if they are to minimise the development setback and to salvage the implementation of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs).

Immediate multilateral and coordinated action is imperative if States are to fulfill the promises made 34 years ago, in the Declaration on the right to development, to co-operate with each other in ensuring development, promote international economic order based on sovereign equality, interdependence, mutual interest and co-operation among all States, and encourage the protection and realisation of human rights.”

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*UN experts: **Mr. Saad Alfaragi**, [Special Rapporteur on the right to development](#); **Mr. Pedro Arrojo-Agudo**, [Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation](#); **Mr. David Boyd**, [Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment](#); **Ms. Agnès Callamard**, [Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions](#); **Ms. Alice Cruz**, [Special Rapporteur on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members](#); **Ms. Isha Dyfan**, [Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia](#); **Mr. Michael Fakhri**, [Special Rapporteur on the right to food](#); **Mr. Diego García-Sayán**, [Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers](#); **Mr. Felipe González Morales**, [Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants](#); **Mr. S. Michael Lynk**, [Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967](#); **Mr. Nils Melzer**, [Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment](#); **Ms. Tlaleng Mofokeng**, [Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health](#); **Ms. Siobhán Mullally**, [Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children](#); **Mr. Clément Nyaletsossi Voule**, [Special Rapporteur on the Rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association](#); **Mr. Tomoya Obokata**, [Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences](#); **Mr. Tomás Ojea Quintana**, [Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea](#); **Mr. Obiora Okafor**, [Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity](#); **Mr. Marcos Orellana**, [Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights](#); **Mr. Gerard Quinn**, [Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities](#); **Mr. Javaid Rehman**, [Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#); **Mr. Olivier De Schutter**, [Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights](#); **Mr. Livingstone Sewanyana**, [Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order](#); **Ms. Mama Fatima Singhateh**, [Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children](#); **Mr. Alioune Tine**, [Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Mali](#); [Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent](#) (Comprising **Ms. Dominique Day** (Chairperson) **Mr. Ahmed Reid**, **Mr. Michal Balcerzak**, **Mr. Sabelo Gumede**, **Mr. Ricardo A. Sunga III**); [Working Group on discrimination against women and girls](#) (Comprising **Elizabeth Broderick** (Chair), **Dorothy Estrada-Tanck**, **Meskerem Geset Techane**, **Ivana Radačić**, **Melissa Upreti** (Vice Chair)); [Working Group on the use of mercenaries](#): (Comprising **Jelena**

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[Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development](#) (Comprising **Mr. Bonny Ibhawoh** (Chair), **Mr. Koen de Feyter**, **Mr. Armando Antonio de Negri Filho**, **Mr. Mihir Kanade**, **Ms. Klentiana Mahmutaj**)

Hon. Mudford Zachariah Mwandenga, African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR), [Chairperson of the Working Group on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Africa](#)

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For inquiries and **media requests**, please contact: Ms Antoanela Pavlova (+41 22 917 9331 / srdevelopment@ohchr.org)

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