

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 34<sup>th</sup> 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.”

ENDS

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

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