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

Regional seminars 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 47/11, provides a summary of the five regional seminars on the contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights. It also includes recommendations based on the substantive discussions during the seminars.

I. Introduction

1. The present report was prepared pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 47/11, in which the Council requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to organize a series of regional seminars, one for each of the five geographical regions, 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 and regional organizations, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations and other stakeholders to identify challenges and gaps and share good practices and experiences in that regard.

2. The working definition of development that was used in the organization of the seminars is contained in the preamble of the Declaration on the Right to Development. Development is defined as "a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting therefrom". A concept note was designed to establish the methodology and the programme of work for all of the regional seminars.[1]

3. The seminar for Europe and Central Asia was held on 1 and 2 September 2022, at the Palais des Nations, in Geneva. Registrations were received from 296 participants, including 138 women and 158 men, from 75 countries. The seminar for the Arabic-speaking countries was held on 8 and 9 November 2022, at United Nations House, in Beirut. It was organized in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and registrations were received from 301 participants (147 women and 154 men) from 30 countries. The seminar for the Africa region was held on 24 and 25 November 2022, at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, and 568 participants (269 women and 299 men) from 51 countries registered for it. The seminar for the Americas and the Caribbean was organized in collaboration with the United Nations University for Peace, and held on 8 and 9 December 2022, in San Jose. It received 175 registration requests from 77 women and 98 men from 50 countries. The seminar for Asia and the Pacific was held on 13 and 14 February 2023 at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in Bangkok. Registrations were received from 445 participants, including 221 women and 224 men, from 78 countries. The five seminars presented 35 panels with a diverse range of some 150 panellists, and brought together approximately 1,800 participants from 138 countries.

4. This series of regional seminars built upon the mandates of the Human Rights Council, discussion and activities on the contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights.[2] Three themes were common to all the seminars: the essential role of international cooperation for sustainable development in promoting and protecting human rights; the commitment to ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions; and the contribution of regional development strategies to the enjoyment of all human rights. These themes were discussed from a regional perspective within the scope of Council resolution 47/11.

5. In addition, each seminar had two region-specific thematic panels, which enabled the series to cover a broader range of topics. The Europe and Central Asia seminar addressed the contribution of official development assistance (ODA) and other forms of financing for development to the enjoyment of all human rights, and the contribution of development opportunities for migrants to the enjoyment all human rights. The seminar for the Arabic-speaking countries included panels on the contribution of development opportunities for youth to the enjoyment of all human rights, and the contribution of the development of food, water and sanitation infrastructure and governance to the enjoyment of all human rights. In the two region-specific panels in the Africa seminar participants considered the contribution of the Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries to the enjoyment of all human rights, and the contribution of the development of infrastructure and governance in the energy and digital sectors to the enjoyment of all human rights. The seminar for the Americas and the Caribbean considered the contribution of the development of cities and

[1] See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/development/seminar-contribution-development/2022-07-01/Seminar-Concept-Note-final.pdf.

[2] See www.ohchr.org/en/development/contribution-development-enjoyment-all-human-rights.

improving local policies to the enjoyment of all human rights, and the contribution of productive capacities in the health sector to the enjoyment of all human rights. Lastly, the Asia and the Pacific seminar focused on the contribution of development of clean and sustainable technology to the enjoyment of all human rights, and the contribution of development and human rights to the global commitment to leave no one behind.

6. Each seminar was held over two days in a hybrid format, involving online and in-person participation. Each comprised of an opening segment aimed at setting the scene for the discussions; a keynote panel followed by a general discussion; thematic panels followed by interactive dialogues; and a wrap-up round table to identify conclusions and recommendations. The programmes of work and related information, including the biographies of the speakers, are available on the webpage of the respective seminar. The present report contains an overview of each seminar, and the conclusions and recommendations of all the seminars.

II. Overview

7. The regional seminar series considered the contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights holistically, from a variety of perspectives ranging from grass-roots lived experiences to the designing of high-level policies and strategies at the local, regional and global levels. The seminars highlighted the synergy of the relationship between development and human rights in their economic, civil, political, social, cultural and environmental aspects. While it is not possible to capture the deliberations of all the seminars in full, this summary report is aimed at reflecting the diversity and richness of the discussion of cross-cutting and region-specific themes.

8. Each seminar underscored the importance of people-centred development to improve the well-being of the entire population and all individuals, based on their active, free and meaningful participation in the process of development and a fair distribution of the resulting benefits, as enshrined in the Declaration on the Right to Development. The importance of development of the people, by the people and for the people, for the benefit of present and future generations, was raised in all regions. The discussions reaffirmed that sustainable development, human rights and peace are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The universality and indivisibility of all human rights, including the right to development, was recognized.

9. The Declaration on the Right to Development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals were referred to regularly, thereby highlighting the nexus between development and human rights. The Secretary-General's call to action for human rights and his report entitled "Our Common Agenda" were mentioned frequently. Many statements emphasized that human rights should guide the policies that were needed at the international, regional, national and local levels to realize the right to development. The concept of a human rights economy, in which human rights would be integrated into economic policies, investment decisions, business models and consumer choices, was introduced and discussed. The development and human rights communities shared the same goals, namely, ending discrimination and marginalization, advancing human dignity and equality, and realizing the well-being and rights of everyone, everywhere.

10. The discussions identified many pressing regional and global development-related issues and their connection to the enjoyment of all human rights. Those issues included poverty, inequality (within and among countries), marginalization and exclusion, the climate crisis, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, armed conflicts, unsuitable development models, technological gaps, food insecurity, limited access to basic health and other public services, unemployment and weak social security, growing authoritarianism and populism, a shrinking civic and political space and repression of human rights and environmental defenders, unresolved legacies of colonialism and neo-colonial exploitation, racism, refugee crises, forced migration, disparity of power between Governments and transnational corporations, the current architecture of international financial institutions and the need to reform it, unsustainable levels of foreign debt and debt distress, corruption, institutional fragility and lack of good governance, tax avoidance and illicit financial flows.

11. In the discussions on the commitment to ending poverty, it was repeatedly noted that the "leaving no one behind" agenda required an environment that enabled marginalized people and people living in poverty to fully participate in and benefit from development policy and economic decision-making. The impact of poverty on vulnerable and marginalized people, including women, youth, refugees, migrants, Indigenous Peoples, minorities and persons with disabilities, was highlighted, including by persons with lived experience of poverty. The importance of decent work and social protection measures was also mentioned frequently, and examples of successful efforts to alleviate poverty were highlighted. Some participants called for revisiting social contracts to ensure lasting development based on social justice.

12. Many speakers highlighted that sustainable development required cooperation and solidarity underpinned by human rights. Discussions often pointed to the COVID-19 pandemic and global vaccine inequity as illustrations of shortcomings in international cooperation and solidarity. Some speakers called for new models of international cooperation, institutional reform and structural transformation of the international financial and trade architecture, and greater South-South cooperation to meet the needs of southern countries, in addition to North-South and triangular cooperation, including through technology transfers. Discussions regarding international cooperation encompassed intergovernmental as well as civil society and business cooperation in economic, trade, finance, cultural, social, environmental and other fields.

13. The series highlighted regional strategies and initiatives that acknowledged the particular historical and developmental challenges and experiences of each region. Participants discussed the benefits of regional initiatives and intra- and inter-regional cooperation and institutions, and region-specific arrangements for human rights standards, trade agreements and development strategies.

14. Participants agreed that development involved more than economic growth and could not be captured by gross domestic product (GDP) alone. Many reiterated that development was not an end in itself, but a means to achieve the well-being of people, including spiritual well-being. They called for new development models. The series pointed to many good practices, including the integration of human rights into common country assessments and cooperation frameworks and the surge initiative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which helps Governments to take account of human rights in budgetary and tax processes in pursuit of human rights economies.

15. Participants discussed the importance of the mutually reinforcing relationship between political reforms and economic development, and the relationship between economic reform and political change. Some noted that fair and inclusive economic development would increase citizens' awareness of human rights – including civil and political rights – and facilitate the transition to more equitable, free and just societies. Speakers also stressed the importance of good governance, the mobilization of domestic resources, tax collection and fiscal space for development programmes, and public services to realize human rights. Concerns were expressed about tax avoidance, illicit financial flows and the disruption caused by unilateral coercive measures. Numerous speakers mentioned contributions of the private sector to development and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights as an important framework to regulate the activities of business enterprises in the context of development. Some speakers expressed concern about the lack of accountability of powerful corporations, and the fact that few businesses incorporated human rights due diligence.

16. The crucial contribution of civil society to sustainable development was a common theme, including of grass-roots movements and trade unions. Many speakers emphasized the importance of active, free and meaningful participation in development, without which development could not be sustainable. Participation must be inclusive and open to all people, including persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, other minorities and marginalized groups. Transparency and access to information were mentioned frequently. Participants emphasized that sustainable development required gender equality.

17. The role and contribution of youth in development was strongly emphasized in all the seminars, including in connection with climate and environmental justice and combating

poverty. Unemployment and lack of economic opportunities were raised as obstacles to youth engagement. Some recommended greater investment in quality education and employment opportunities for youth.

A. Europe and Central Asia regional seminar

18. The opening remarks for the Europe and Central Asia regional seminar[3] were delivered by the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, followed by the President of the Human Rights Council and the Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. They differentiated between development that genuinely contributed to human rights and development that was strictly market oriented and that resulted in growing inequalities, populist politics and the depletion of natural resources and biodiversity. They referred to the universal periodic review and other mechanisms, including the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, as platforms for mobilizing human and financial resources to realize resilient, inclusive and sustainable development that contributed to human rights.

19. Common challenges identified in the seminar included extreme inequality within and among countries, overcentralized development, poverty gaps, food shortages, the climate crisis, economic crises, armed conflicts, rising unemployment, civil unrest, corruption and lack of good governance. Participants mentioned unilateral coercive measures as challenges to solidarity and human rights protection. They also emphasized the importance of infrastructure, technology transfer to developing countries, and enhanced ODA to the better enjoyment of all human rights.

20. In the keynote panel, speakers highlighted the persistent challenges faced by marginalized groups, the need for vaccine equity and the importance of addressing misinformation. Participants argued for efforts to communicate in simple language in order to reach people effectively. Panellists highlighted the extreme levels of inequality and the need for a complete reset of the global financial architecture to fund global public goods and address climate justice. The panel also acknowledged the harsh realities in many regions and the need for tangible remedies to address them. The discussion touched on issues of redistribution, pre-distribution, taxation and the Sustainable Development Goals, including through a political economy lens and the promotion of public purpose. Panellists emphasized the role of civil society in delivering sustainable development and promoting good governance, and noted the importance of collaboration with the private sector.

21. During the panel on the essential role of international cooperation for sustainable development in promoting and protecting human rights, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, panellists called for enhanced financing for development and debt relief for developing countries, as well as the role of youth and human rights mechanisms in promoting international cooperation. Speakers addressed the huge development gap for developing countries, which had become aggravated during the COVID-19 pandemic. One speaker called for international cooperation to include consulting young people, including co-leadership and co-creation with youth in decision-making mechanisms. Another panellist discussed the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on human rights and development and argued for an evidence-based approach to assess those impacts. Participants emphasized the urgent need for the right to development to be a reality for everyone, especially in countries facing financial difficulties and food shortages.

22. In the panel on the commitment to ending poverty, speakers presented proposals for redefining development to prioritize human rights, re-evaluate the emphasis on GDP growth and involve people living in poverty in decision-making processes. They argued against policies that disregarded and stigmatized persons with lived experience of poverty. One speaker detailed the disproportionate effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on women. To address that, it was important to build on recommendations from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and related special procedure mandate

[3] See www.ohchr.org/en/events/meetings/2022/europe-and-central-asia-regional-seminar.

holders. Participants discussed the need for increased budgetary support for social protection floors. They called for mechanisms to ensure affordable social protection programmes for low-income countries and for developed countries to be held accountable for contributing to those programmes. They also discussed the undervaluation of the care economy and other ways to promote gender equality.

23. In the panel on contribution of ODA and other forms of financing for development to the enjoyment of human rights, the panellists argued for policy coherence and global systemic reforms to overcome obstacles to development and ensure the enjoyment of human rights by all. Speakers raised concerns about debt diplomacy and disregard for national priorities and ownership. ODA should contribute to the welfare state and build capacity in recipient countries. One speaker presented a good practice of dedicating 1 per cent of gross national income (GNI) per capita to ODA while ring-fencing it from environmental and migration assistance. Another speaker shared challenges in empowering young people to participate in political decision-making in recipient countries. Participants argued for a needs-based vaccine distribution worldwide, instead of vaccine nationalism. The discussion emphasized the legal duty of international cooperation and assistance, as affirmed by treaty bodies.

24. During the panel on how development opportunities for migrants contribute to the enjoyment of all human rights, it was noted that the Global Compact for Migration had established a common language to promote inter-State cooperation and create conditions for migrants to fully contribute to sustainable development. Challenges relating to opportunities for migrants included poverty, unemployment, insecurity, conflicts and climate-related disasters. Speakers recommended increased international cooperation, promoting legal and safe migration pathways, protecting migrants from human rights violations, addressing root causes, combating trafficking in persons and promoting the inclusion, integration and empowerment of migrants and refugees. Speakers also recommended that migration laws should be made compatible with human rights, education should be provided for migrant integration and the migration-related issues should be addressed as part of social rights work. Participants questioned the prioritization of security concerns over development by some developed countries and recommended a shift from that to a right to development-based approach.

25. During the panel on the contribution of regional development strategies to the enjoyment of all human rights, speakers stressed that inequalities and current crises undermined human rights and called for a new eco-social contract to address those issues. The new social contract should include progressive fiscal policies, address historical injustices, promote gender justice and foster solidarity. Challenges relating to regional development initiatives included their intra- and extraregional impacts on human rights, tensions between development and environmental protection and the need for education on sustainable development. Speakers called for assessment of and accountability for the extraterritorial impact of regional strategies on human rights. They also discussed the role of national human rights institutions in advising Governments on regional policies.

26. In the final round table, panellists emphasized the importance of integrating human rights language into development strategies and finding ways to measure the impact of development programmes that left no one behind. They recognized the importance of involving vulnerable groups in planning and implementing developmental processes. The participants considered simplifying methodologies for human rights impact assessments and establishing databases on good practices relating to the right to development. Panellists also discussed the challenges of balancing development and human rights, especially in countries facing security threats, and suggested alternative approaches to replacing military expenditure by promoting human rights and social development. They also stressed the importance of active community participation in policy planning.

B. Seminar for the Arabic-speaking countries

27. In opening the seminar for the Arabic-speaking countries, the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, the President of the Human Rights Council, the Deputy Prime Minister of Lebanon and the Leader of the Governance and Conflict Prevention Cluster

of ESCWA spoke about the relationship between development and human rights, and region-specific challenges, while reaffirming that human rights and development were interdependent and mutually reinforcing.[4]

28. The prevailing themes throughout the seminars included the obstacles to development and the enjoyment of human rights posed by poverty, inequality, sectarianism, corruption and nepotism; the pivotal role of youth in sustainable development; the challenges of climate change; the importance of women's rights, gender equality and women's participation in development; the need for greater civic space, democracy and inclusive participatory people-centred development; and the vulnerable situation of refugees and migrants. The importance of good governance, effective public institutions and government accountability was mentioned frequently. Some speakers referred to the situations of violence and instability in many parts of the region and called for more attention to be paid to conflict prevention. Participants asserted the need to address the interdependence of peace, sustainable development and human rights in development polices.

29. Participants in the panel discussion on the contribution of development opportunities for youth to the enjoyment of all human rights discussed how to provide youth and their communities with development opportunities. Youth made up half of the region's population and were an important force for change through their energy, creativity and entrepreneurship. They should be seen as community builders, innovators and partners in development, not merely as its beneficiaries. Participants spoke about addressing fundamental challenges faced by youth, such as unemployment and lack of economic opportunity, limited access to quality education and learning opportunities, gender-based and other forms of discrimination, mental health issues and general disempowerment. The urgent need for investment in youth, especially women and girls, was highlighted, as was the principle of intergenerational equity. Speakers provided examples of initiatives by and for youth in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, Yemen and other countries, including the United Nations Children's Fund Learning to Earning and cash-for-work programmes.

30. The panel discussion on the contribution of the development of food, water and sanitation infrastructure and governance to the enjoyment of all human rights illustrated how access to food, water and sanitation were not only human rights, but also essential enablers for education, health, employment and the enjoyment of other rights. The discussion addressed issues relating to water management, governance and distribution; the importance of water to agriculture, food production and food security; the value of new technologies to food, water and sanitation; and the role of education, vocational training and employment opportunities in realizing human rights. Participants discussed how to overcome challenges posed by climate change, including extreme rainfall and drought, high temperatures and risks from fire and flooding; tensions between urban and rural water requirements; pollution and water contamination; food and water waste; and the vulnerability of migrants and refugees to food insecurity.

31. Food insecurity was attributed to global crises, including the war in Ukraine, inflation, political instability, economic challenges, climate change and other environmental factors, water scarcity and the loss of arable land. The importance of international cooperation and solidarity for food security was highlighted, as was the need for regional cooperation to address water management and the consequences of climate change. One speaker underscored the importance of integrating the right to development and the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment in addressing the provision of food, water and sanitation.

32. In the discussion on the commitment to ending poverty, presenters highlighted the multidimensional aspect of poverty in Arabic-speaking countries. It was suggested that poverty in the region was intergenerational, and economic growth alone would not solve this problem. The causes of poverty were complex, and much-needed reform faced a political economy challenge that required a new social contract with major governance and economic policy changes. Panellists also highlighted the importance of decent work, international labour standards, the role of the private sector, social protection, and a rights-based agenda

[4] See www.ohchr.org/en/events/meetings/2022/arabic-speaking-countries-regional-seminar.

in support of the Sustainable Development Goals. Community development was mentioned frequently, and one speaker illustrated the value of drawing on communities' knowledge and experience in development projects.

33. In the discussion on the contribution of regional development strategies to the enjoyment of all human rights, speakers looked at the progress on common challenges in the region. Development challenges relating to migrants and refugees were also examined more generally, and the importance of respecting the human rights and agency of migrants was emphasized. There was also a discussion on the activities of civil society networks in the region on alternative development models.

34. In the panel on the essential role of international cooperation for sustainable development, speakers highlighted the devastating consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for development and human rights. Participants argued that lack of international solidarity affected the world capacity to respond to the pandemic, with wealthier countries hoarding vaccines and medical protective equipment. However, participants also shared good practices at the regional and international levels in the field of health. Participants explained how treaty bodies and other United Nations mechanisms could contribute to fostering international cooperation. Speaking about the role of civil society in the region, one panellist emphasized the importance of government cooperation with civil society and called for greater international dialogue within Arab civil society.

35. Some speakers called for a shift from strict focus on economic growth to emphasis on sustainable human development, including human and social capital. Development should ensure non-discrimination, equity, self-determination and consistency with international human rights standards, government accountability and rights-based popular participation in decision-making. Good governance was essential to secure the right of all people to participate in and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development. Participants proposed political and economic reforms to spur economic development and secure equal rights and opportunities for all. They argued that economic development would increase citizens' awareness of rights and facilitate transition to more equitable, free and just societies.

C. Africa regional seminar

36. The opening remarks for the Africa regional seminar[5] were delivered by the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, the President of the Human Rights Council, the Acting Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, the Deputy Executive Director of United Nations Human Settlements Programme, a member of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights representing the African Union, and the representative of the Attorney General of Kenya. They highlighted that development went beyond economic growth and defended the importance of promoting a human rights-enhancing economy, regional economic integration and the protection of the environment as paths to building resilience against external shocks and for sustainable development in Africa.

37. Recurring themes in the seminar were the importance of promoting physical and mental health, education, housing, social protection, a clean and healthy environment as a human right and an integral part of the rule of law, often with extraterritorial dimensions. Participants considered that human rights should form the basis of a framework for accountability to curb the capture of influence and unequal power at the national and global levels, including by tackling corruption, illicit financial flows, unsustainable debt, austerity measures, exclusionary employment practices, the shrinking of the policy and the civic spaces, pollution, climate change, and unaddressed legacies of colonialism. Some participants elaborated on the interdependent and mutually reinforcing nature of peace, development and human rights, with none taking precedence over the others. Panellists called for the costs of economic activities to be internalized and damages to be paid for rights violations. The discussions demonstrated a clear need for a human rights-enhancing economy.

[5] See www.ohchr.org/en/events/meetings/2022/africa-regional-seminar.

38. During the keynote panel, speakers acknowledged the devastating impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable economies and the surge in armed conflicts. Speakers highlighted the importance of identifying challenges and sharing experiences to combat poverty, health and climate emergencies, conflicts, inequalities and discrimination. Participants mentioned the United Nations mechanisms on the right to development, including the Working Group, the Special Rapporteur and the Expert Mechanism, and their policy guidance. The African Continental Free Trade Area was highlighted as a "game-changer" to boost intra-African trade and fuel the creation of decent jobs on the continent. Participants called for inclusive measures for nature conservation and in the fight against climate change. Some argued for the adoption of a legally binding instrument on the right to development as key to helping to promote international and regional cooperation in Africa.

39. During the panel on international cooperation, speakers addressed global challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. They highlighted the Charter of the United Nations and various international declarations and treaties as being legal frameworks that imposed obligations on States to act together. The speakers discussed the need for solidarity to proactively address inequalities, and combat corruption and other structural obstacles that generated poverty worldwide. Speakers shared good practices in the work of United Nations country teams for overcoming national challenges relating to droughts and other crises. The speakers called for international cooperation to combat climate and environmental injustice and protect environmental human rights defenders. They emphasized that development and human rights should go hand in hand and called for a multisectoral approach to tackle corruption. Participants also raised questions relating to displacement, grave human rights violations and the need for adequate funding and support for adaptation and financing in developing countries.

40. In the panel discussion on the commitment to end poverty in all its forms and dimensions, speakers discussed the importance of promoting international cooperation to overcome poverty, especially in least developed countries. They provided examples of effective policies in Botswana and Brazil, and stressed the need for accountability and youth participation in policymaking. The speakers also emphasized the importance of including persons with disabilities and promoting their rights to decent work and education in poverty-reduction efforts. During the discussion, participants raised concerns about how to protect the mental health of youth and the rights of children with disabilities. The panellists stressed the importance of youth mobilization beyond borders and government accountability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

41. The speakers on the panel on the contribution of the Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries discussed particular challenges faced by those low-income countries with high vulnerability to economic and environmental shocks and low levels of human assets.[6] Speakers proposed a framework of green structural transformation to move towards higher-value-added sectors of economic activity that allowed for sustainable graduation from the least developed countries status. That required transfer of technology, better governance and an increase in access to development and climate finance. Speakers argued for continental integration and South-South cooperation. Participants discussed how least developed countries could draw lessons from human rights mechanisms in the design and implementation of development policies. Speakers also shared good practices in promoting entrepreneurship among women in Africa to make economies more dynamic and better equip women to overcome cycles of poverty and violence. The speakers emphasized the leadership and legitimacy of Africa in shaping the global development and human rights discourse. Participants also discussed the impact of carbon trading on Africa and the need for better distribution of natural resource rents in resource-rich countries.

42. In the panel on the contribution of the development of infrastructure and governance in the energy and digital sectors to the enjoyment of all human rights, speakers advocated policy and governance frameworks that reflected the specific needs of each country and supported the transition in the energy sector. One speaker called for a rights-based strategy

[6] For the relationship between the right to development and the criteria for classifying least developed countries (in terms of income and economic growth, human assets, and economic and environmental vulnerability), see A/HRC/45/21.

for digital and energy development and stressed the importance of universal access funds and meaningful connectivity. The digital space reflected the asymmetries of society in terms of gender, class, geography and financial flows, among others, and those should be addressed both online and offline. One speaker shared the positive impacts on gender equality of promoting access to clean water and solar electricity in poor communities. The issue of data ownership and digital technology was also raised, with a warning that dependence on global platforms could harm small and medium-sized enterprises. Participants emphasized the need for home-grown solutions, intersectoral approaches and investment in research and development, while acknowledging corruption as a significant challenge facing the development process.

43. The panel on the contribution of regional development strategies to the enjoyment of all human rights focused on the contribution of the Agreement Establishing African Continental Free Trade Area and the Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want to the enjoyment to all human rights. Participants recognized the potential of the Continental Free Trade Area Agreement to increase intra-Africa trade, employment generation and gender equality. Challenges identified included infrastructure deficits, non-tariff barriers and capacity issues that negatively affected some communities in the implementation of the treaty. An inclusive implementation of the Agreement required national and regional implementation strategies that integrated gender perspectives. Participants discussed embedding human rights in business and trade operations, and the use of continental and subregional human rights and justice mechanisms to compensate for losses in sectors of economic activity owing to trade liberalization and to regulate corporate lobbyists. They called for a complementary policy to improve cross-border trade, simplify the process of starting a business and improve access to funds for young people to support their entrepreneurial ventures.

44. In the final panel, on good practices and experiences in addressing challenges and gaps, participants identified challenges faced by Africa, including poverty, the rich-poor divide and the lack of infrastructure to support digital innovation. Participants emphasized the need for international cooperation and partnership to achieve development and realize human rights within and beyond Africa. They stressed the need for the United Nations to be more active in promoting cooperation that enhanced human rights and held developed countries accountable. They noted that decent work required fair wages and a work environment that promoted human rights and the means to overcome poverty. Youth should have equal opportunities to employment, access to basic commodities and education. Concrete outcomes required protecting democratic spaces. One participant called for more inclusive youth participation, without privileging youth in elite classes.

D. Americas and the Caribbean regional seminar

45. The seminar was opened by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, the Rector of the University for Peace, the President of the Human Rights Council and the President of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.[7] They emphasized the interdependence and mutual reinforcement of sustainable development and human rights as particularly important in times of multiple crises. They underscored the importance of regional and United Nations human rights mechanisms to guide development policies.

46. A recurrent theme during the seminar was the complexity of development at the national and international levels. Common recommendations related to the promotion of active popular participation in decision-making for development, measures to reduce entrenched inequalities and discrimination in all its forms, by addressing historical factors. Some obstacles to development and its contribution to human rights included unsustainable debt, tax evasion, tied aid, corruption, the unresolved legacies of colonialism and neo-colonialism, climate change and the resurgence of authoritarian Governments. Participants also highlighted the importance of growing intraregional cooperation and integration.

47. During the keynote panel, speakers discussed the importance of equality, anti-discrimination laws, freedom of religion and belief, and the role of United Nations country

[7] See www.ohchr.org/en/events/meetings/2022/americas-and-caribbean-regional-seminar.

presences and businesses in development that contributed to human rights. With reference to minority rights, one speaker presented a practical guide to developing comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation.[8] Another speaker emphasized the importance of integrating human rights into country development programmes. Speakers advocated for businesses to conduct due diligence on potential human rights risks in operations. Participants discussed political economy issues relating to development and the key role of the right to development in tackling inequalities within and among countries, the legacy of colonialism, poverty, discrimination, exclusion and stigmatization.

48. In the panel discussion on the essential role of international cooperation for sustainable development in promoting and protecting human rights, speakers emphasized the importance of addressing poverty, inequality, discrimination, vaccine injustice, corruption and debt to promote sustainable development and human rights. They recommended alternatives to current economic systems with a view to promoting more just and sustainable development, through global frameworks and global approaches with context-specific actions. Participants discussed the role of OHCHR, grass-roots movements, trade unions, youth and local communities in promoting better and more just development and economic policies through partnerships and collaboration among local, national and international stakeholders. Speakers defended the realization of the right to development, from the individual and collective dimensions, and the removal of obstacles to women's realization of that right. In the interactive dialogue, participants called for international solidarity between the Americas and Africa, especially considering the African diaspora in the region.

49. During the panel on the commitment to ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions, speakers explained how poverty was both a cause and a consequence of violations of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. The digital divide rendered persons living in poverty more vulnerable to human rights violations. How to bridge that divide was a key issue. Good practices were shared in terms of projects led by civil society organizations, the United Nations and national Governments that helped to reduce extreme poverty, promote development and provide access to public services and to the rights to adequate housing, education and health. Speakers argued in favour of communities and persons with lived experience of poverty being protagonists of policies and studies aimed at promoting social justice. Policies should also address the multidimensional nature of poverty. Participants discussed specific challenges faced by women and girls living in poverty, seed funds to promote decent jobs and economic empowerment, and the importance of debating the structural transformation of economies.

50. In the panel on the contribution of development of cities and improving local policies to the enjoyment of all human rights, panellists discussed the right to housing, the participatory processes in cities and in rural communities to help steer development that contributed to human rights, and the importance of building accessible cities so that persons with disabilities could enjoy human rights. The obligation of Governments to respect, protect and fulfil the right to adequate housing included considerations of affordability, location, quality and cultural appropriateness. Some good practices were shared in relation to participatory budgets and policies, including with the support of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). Those policies had helped Quilombola, Indigenous and other communities in the enjoyment of rights to adequate housing, water and sanitation, and education, as well as better access to public and cultural goods. Participants discussed the implementation of the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement) and the Human Rights Cities Network. They also called upon States to regulate private interests and protect public goods from private capture.

51. In the panel on the contribution of productive capacities in the health sector to the enjoyment of all human rights, speakers presented examples of South-South cooperation in technology transfer relating to medical equipment, the importance of access to affordable assistive technologies, the mobilization of resources, budget analysis for productive

[8] See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/2022-11-28/OHCHR_ERT_Protecting_Minority%20Rights_Practical_Guide_web.pdf.

capacities in the health sector and beyond, and the essential importance of national sovereignty over the means to deliver health as a human right for all. Speakers called for moving productive capacities away from weapons to health and education. They also called for technology transfer relating to assistive technologies to low- and middle-income countries to promote universal access for persons with disabilities and to maintain, repair and replace those technologies. They denounced the negative impact of austerity measures on essential public spending on health. Participants mentioned challenges and opportunities relating to digitalization in the health sector, international cooperation in the field of sports as a means of promoting health, and the importance of progressive taxation.

52. In the panel on the contribution of regional development strategies to the enjoyment of all human rights, speakers discussed regional integration as exemplified by the Caribbean Community, regional coordination of Indigenous Peoples through the Confederation of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin, and the work of OHCHR in vulnerable regions covering different countries. Panellists argued that regional integration contributed to overcoming the legacies of colonialism and slavery by promoting economic growth, sustainable development and full employment, especially for young people. The transnational coordination of Indigenous Peoples increased the effectiveness of protecting biomes with unique biodiversity and was essential to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Participants emphasized the importance of regional cooperation to ensure participation and adequate reparations for the legacies of colonialism. Broader regional integration mechanisms, such as the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, also presented important opportunities for creating conditions for the enjoyment of rights in the region.

53. The final round table addressed issues relating to good governance, policy space, social justice and achieving the right to development through intentional efforts to address poverty and inequality within and among countries. Participants argued for more meaningful participation from youth and persons with disabilities in designing development policies. They explained that austerity measures curtailed States' capacities to protect and fulfil human rights and argued for sustained political planning that favoured investing in economic and social rights and in development. They called for the mainstreaming of human rights into international environmental, trade and tax law. Speakers also called for political education and for combating anti-rights and far-right movements.

E. Asia and the Pacific regional seminar

54. In opening the seminar for Asia and the Pacific, the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, the President of the Human Rights Council, the Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and the Director-General of the Department of International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand highlighted relationships between development and human rights, and region-specific challenges, while emphasizing the importance of realizing the Sustainable Development Goals.[9]

55. Recurring themes in the seminar included diversity within the Asia-Pacific region, the need for a critical review of current development, financial and trade models, the threat of climate change to development and human rights, and inclusive active, free and meaningful participation, including by civil society and Indigenous Peoples, in the design and implementation of development policies and strategies. Among other issues, speakers addressed the need for development models that were better suited to different parts of the region, the effects of geopolitics and geoeconomics on the international development framework and human rights, and the particular challenges faced by small island developing States.

56. In the panel on the contribution of the development of clean and sustainable technology to the enjoyment of all human rights, participants discussed the role of technology in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Speakers expressed concerns about technologies, mining and other related activities developed in the name of climate action that were not sustainable or that had negative human rights implications for vulnerable and

[9] See www.ohchr.org/en/events/meetings/2023/asia-and-pacific-regional-seminar.

marginalized communities. Participants argued for the adoption of human rights safeguards, including through the application of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Speakers discussed the urgent need for the transfer of environmentally sound technology and green capital to developing countries, including support to small and medium enterprises, and flexibility in intellectual property rights to facilitate transfers. One speaker presented an innovative United Nations "environmental dashboard" designed to enhance agricultural productivity and support the right to food in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

57. The discussion on the global commitment to leave no one behind illustrated how development policies and activities could better contribute to the enjoyment of all human rights by all. Some speakers observed that economic growth had often been at the cost of growing inequality. One panellist described the contribution of national human rights institutions to ensuring that human rights were addressed in all national development policies and initiatives from the beginning of policymaking processes. Another speaker discussed the negative impacts of colonization on Indigenous Peoples and called for decolonizing development policies and development cooperation.

58. Speakers highlighted that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was a blueprint for an inclusive and non-discriminatory approach to development involving full participation of persons with disabilities throughout all stages of development. One speaker described the good practices of integrating human rights into development through the common country analysis and translating the cooperation framework into the planning processes and projects in South-East Asia. Another speaker referred to the importance for UN-Women to identify those left behind owing to historical or institutional discrimination in pursuing the pledge to leave no one behind in South Asia. Participants argued in favour of intersectionality in promoting development and considered the specific needs of Indigenous Peoples, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and those experiencing discrimination on the basis of caste.

59. In the panel discussion on the contribution of regional development strategies to the enjoyment of all human rights, the environmental dimension of regional development strategies and human rights was mentioned frequently. Speakers described the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent[10] as a response to regional development challenges that was grounded in human rights principles, placed people at the centre of development and was aligned with the 2030 Agenda. Participants referred to the Pacific United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023–2027 as a contribution to national development priorities in the region, relating to the planet, people, prosperity and peace.

60. Speakers addressed the importance of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, as well as of environmental defenders and the environmental rule of law for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and provided examples of regional development processes and strategies that addressed environmental rights. They included the Committee on Environment and Development of ESCAP and its recognition of the importance of participatory approaches to environmental protection and related procedural human rights. Subregional intergovernmental forums, including the Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum, had also discussed development, environmental rights and defenders.

61. In a discussion about mobilizing women's rights organizations around the 2030 Agenda, one speaker described a care-centric and rights-based feminist approach to development that would make universal health care, guaranteed free education, housing and the right to a healthy environment the priorities, around which development would be organized. Gender equality was invoked as a necessary principle in development planning.

62. In the panel discussion on international cooperation, the value of multilateralism was emphasized. Multiple forms of international cooperation were discussed, including South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation, as well as cooperation with international financial institutions, civil society and the private sector. International cooperation was described as central to the draft legally binding instrument on the right to development.

[10] See www.forumsec.org/2050strategy/.

Participants took note of the different perceptions of countries in the global North and in the global South about the legal character of international cooperation.

63. In the discussion on the commitment to end poverty, persons with lived experience demonstrated the need for the active participation of people living in poverty in the design of poverty-alleviation programmes. Participants argued for the removal of educational and financial obstacles to accessing social security programmes.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

64. **Participants in the regional seminars welcomed the opportunity to engage in the topic of the contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights, taking into account regional realities and expertise.**

65. **The seminar series called for robust international cooperation and solidarity to ensure that development contributes to the enjoyment of all human rights for all. Member States, international organizations and development partners should support and enhance North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable development with a view to the constant improvement of the well-being of individuals and peoples, as envisaged in the Declaration on the Right to Development. To that effect, they should promote the integration of human rights in global, regional and national policies, including economic policies, bearing in mind the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights.**

66. **Non-State actors, including businesses, civil society organizations and national human rights institutions should work together, both within and beyond borders, for development that contributes to the enjoyment of all human rights for all. Businesses should respect human rights and be accountable for upstream and downstream supply chains. Civil society organizations and other stakeholders should consider human rights as useful means to assess the consistency of economic activity with international human rights norms and obligations, including, in particular, the Declaration on the Right to Development.**

67. **Member States, international organizations, development partners and other relevant stakeholders should make additional efforts to ensure that international development cooperation:**

(a) **Meets ODA commitments, including by taking more ambitious steps to reach the 0.7 per cent target of developed countries' GNI in ODA to developing countries, and 0.20 per cent of their GNI in ODA to least developed countries, with additional and separate commitments for environment and in-country migration assistance; and promotes a net flow of wealth to the Global South;**

(b) **Is guided by the principles of ownership of development priorities by developing countries, focus on results, participation, equality and non-discrimination, people-centred development, transparency and shared responsibility; and preserves the fiscal space for meeting human rights obligations, including the rights to development, health and education;**

(c) **Takes into account the specific needs of people living in least developed countries, small island developing States, landlocked developing countries, countries in conflict, and countries under sanctions.**

68. **Member States, international organizations, development partners and other relevant stakeholders should support international development cooperation, national and subnational development programmes and policies by:**

(a) **Integrating the recommendations of the universal periodic review, the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, treaty bodies and regional human rights mechanisms;**

(b) **Incorporating human rights impact assessments and human rights due diligence, as well as taking into account potential extraterritorial human rights impacts;**

(c) **Addressing the main obstacles to the realization of the right to development, including neo-colonialism, racism and racial discrimination, foreign domination and occupation, unsustainable debt, illicit financial flows, corruption and environment and climate-related challenges;**

(d) **Promoting effective disarmament and redirecting resources released from disarmament to health, education and other development-related policies, in particular policies in developing countries;**

(e) **Including effective participatory processes in their design, implementation and assessment, based on the right to active, free and meaningful participation, including by women and girls, young people, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, people of African descent, minorities, local communities, migrants, refugees, persons with lived experience of poverty and persons living in regions and areas historically left behind in development processes, among others; and leaving no one behind;**

(f) **Addressing poverty, in all its dimensions, and inequality within and among countries in order to meet the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 1 (end poverty in all its forms everywhere) and Goal 10 (reduce inequality within and among countries), including through the whole-of-government and "Delivering as one" approaches;**

(g) **Treating food, water and sanitation as rights and not commodities, and building resilience and sustainability of food, water and sanitation governance and infrastructure, especially in countries most affected by climate change, conflict and other crises;**

(h) **Developing infrastructure to provide sufficient, affordable, reliable and sustainable electricity and Internet access everywhere, as essential means for accessing other human rights. This should take into account the specific needs of each country and support the just transition in the energy sector and to the digital economy by supporting those employed in the most affected sectors;**

(i) **Better operationalizing mechanisms for the transfer of technologies, including sustainable green technologies;**

(j) **Transferring technology in the health sector in a manner that contributes to in-country, regional and global resilience against future health crises, drawing from the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, and ensuring access to essential and assistive technologies everywhere;**

(k) **Distributing resources for health, internationally and within countries, based on needs assessments and not on the wealth of countries or of consumers;**

(l) **Building sustainable, safe and accessible cities and regions, with economic, social, cultural and political integration that contributes to the enjoyment of all human rights by all.**

69. **Member States, international organizations and development partners should mainstream human rights into the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries. United Nations and regional human rights mechanisms should consider the specific needs of least developed countries and the commitments made in the Doha Programme of Action in their recommendations to recipient and donor countries.**

70. **All relevant stakeholders should engage with the third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries and the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States, and their preparatory work, with a view to adopting ambitious programmes of action to help these countries overcome structural barriers to achieving development that contribute to the enjoyment of all human rights;**

71. **Member States should continue to negotiate the draft convention on the right to development in good faith, with a view to its adoption and entry into force;**

72. **OHCHR capacities should be strengthened to augment its technical advice and support to States and United Nations country teams in the area of sustainable development and the right to development, including through deepening the operationalization of human rights economies and studies and the development of tools for assessing the role of people-centred development to the enjoyment of all human rights.**