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

Written statement* submitted by Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association, a non- governmental organization 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.

[21 August 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Right to Development in Africa

Introduction:

Every person has the right to development on all levels; economic, political, and social. Governments have to provide the needed resources for the people to preserve, protect and enhance their well-being so that they will be able to grow. People also have the right to be treated equally in terms of accessing services and opportunities.

Due to the constant struggle with rapid increase in population growth rates, climate change, and political conflicts, African countries suffer from many economic, political, and social problems that directly impact, not just people's right to development across all fields, but also their basic human rights.

In this context, Maat for Peace focuses on the right to development in Africa and to what extent African people can enjoy this right. Maat also is going to point out some of the challenges that face Sudanese people and prevent them from achieving their right to development. Finally, Maat will submit a list of recommendations that it believes can help solve some of the challenges regarding the right to development in Africa.

Right to Development in Africa:

One of the biggest challenges that face people in Africa and prevent their development is Poverty. Nearly 9 out of 10 people suffering from extreme poverty were found in African countries.

Due to COVID-19, tens of millions of other people were pushed into poverty, exacerbating poverty rates in Africa, especially in countries that were most affected by the pandemic such as Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo(1).

As for Informal Employment and Economic Turmoil, inequality and lack of economic opportunities have a direct impact on African people's economic and social status, as well as their general well-being represented in their physical and mental health(2). They also affect the ability of people to have an adequate standard of living and their ability to access different services(3).

Over 1 billion people live in the sub-Saharan region of Africa, where 22 countries are suffering from economic turmoil and conflicts. Consequently, in 2022, economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa has dropped to 3.6% from 4.1% in 2021, and it is estimated that it will further decrease to 3.1% in 2023(4). However, economic growth is expected to increase to 3.7% and 3.9% in 2024 and 2025(5).

Additionally, Women in African countries face gender inequality and discrimination in many forms and across various aspects of life. The culture of many African societies prevents girls from receiving education, thus reducing their chances to be able to work in high-level positions which hinder their economic development and impact their quality of life(6). Moreover, such groups suffer from discrimination in recruitment by employers which makes their economic participation more difficult(7).

Child marriages and early pregnancies also hinder the personal, social, and economic development of girls since they get overwhelmed by the burdens of responsibilities that they are not ready yet ready to bear(8). Central and western Africa has the lowest rate (less than 40%) of women and girls who can take their own decision regarding their marriages and sexual lives till 2023.

Shedding light on the right to development in the Sudan which is among the countries worst affected by political conflicts, poverty, hunger, and diseases, and is one of the African countries with the biggest challenges and obstacles facing the way of achieving sustainable development goals, massive numbers of the Sudanese people are deprived of many essential rights and subjected to many violations and threatening situations to their development and well-being.

The biggest challenge that faces the Sudanese people currently and deprives them in many ways, of their right to development, is the armed political conflict that began between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in April 2023(9).

Sudanese people are struggling with poverty, hunger, food insecurity, deteriorating economic status in the country, and poor health conditions, which all have a direct and deep impact on their well-being and ability to grow and have development.

More than half of the population in the Sudan is living in poverty and around 10 million people are suffering from food insecurity, due to the political conflict, decreased international aid, and excessive increase in prices of essential products such as food and medicine till 2023(10).

Moreover, the health situation in the Sudan is severely deteriorating as around 3 million children suffer from malnutrition, and 610,000 others suffer from acute malnutrition every year.

Besides, the current political conflict has caused many healthcare facilities to shut down, therefore many people who need medical attention cannot receive it(11). In addition, the spread of diseases such as measles contributes to increasing death toll. Furthermore, over 219,000 pregnant women are currently at risk and suffer from high levels of anxiety and stress due to the ongoing armed conflict, which can affect the well-being of their unborn children, in terms of their brain development or immune system, or can cause others to miscarriage or lead to preterm births(12).

In addition to suffering from other political and economic challenges, Sudanese women have to deal with gender-based violence, as more than 3 million girls and women in the Sudan are at risk of being subjected to gender-based violence(13), that causes them grave mental and physical problems, and eliminate any chances of personal, social, economic or political development.

Recommendations:

- 1 The level of education has a direct impact on the level of social and economic development in any country. Maat for Peace recommends the HRC urge the governments of African countries to reform their strategies and prioritize education by increasing the fund of the educational system;
- 2 Maat for Peace recommends the HRC call on international donors to support African countries, especially those suffering from conflicts, by increasing financial aid directed towards policies and programs that support, protect, and promote the well-being of children.
- 3 Maat for Peace is deeply concerned with the general state of women in the Sudan, particularly during these times of political, social, and economic turmoil. Accordingly, it recommends the HRC urge the government of the Sudan and design social protection programs, especially for women and children, to provide them with basic needs, and protect them from the threats they are forced to face in their daily lives since they are two of the most vulnerable groups in the Sudanese society.
- 4 Maat welcomes the HRC's decision to strengthen the mandate of the designated UN Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan and encourages more cooperation between the Expert on the Sudan and the special reporter on development, attaching more focus on the developmental challenges in the Sudan, including poverty, health, and poor education.

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