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Visit to Honduras

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to development, Surya Deva*

Summary

The Special Rapporteur on the right to development, Surya Deva, conducted a country visit to Honduras from 11 to 21 November 2024. The main objective of the visit was to assess the realization of the right to development in the country and to identify the existing challenges, in order to provide recommendations for the Government and other stakeholders in implementing the right to development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In the present report, the Special Rapporteur provides observations about best practices and challenges regarding selected aspects of the right to development, and makes recommendations to implement a model of inclusive, participatory and sustainable development.

* The summary of the report is being circulated in all official languages. The report itself, which is annexed to the summary, is being circulated in the language of submission and Spanish only.

Annex

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to development, Surya Deva, on his visit to Honduras

I. Introduction

1. The Special Rapporteur on the right to development, Surya Deva, visited Honduras from 11 to 21 November 2024 at the invitation of the Government.

2. The Special Rapporteur visited Tegucigalpa, Choluteca, La Paz, La Esperanza, Marcala, Siguatepeque, San Pedro Sula, El Progreso and Agua Blanca Sur. Owing to the weather conditions, unfortunately he could not travel to La Ceiba, Tocoa and Roatán, as originally planned.

3. The Special Rapporteur expresses his sincere thanks to the representatives he met from the following government ministries and institutes: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Ministry of Human Rights, the Ministry of Economic Development, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Ministry of Governance, Justice and Decentralization, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the National Institute for Youth, the National Agrarian Institute, the Honduran Institute of Geology and Mines and the Honduran Social Security Institute.

4. The Special Rapporteur would also like to thank the representatives of the Attorney General's Office, the Office of the National Commissioner for Human Rights (CONADEH), the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Cortés, the Honduran Private Enterprise Council (COHEP), the Asociación Coordinadora de Mujeres Campesinas de La Paz (COMUCAP), civil society organizations and the Lenca Indigenous councils with whom he met during the visit.

5. The Special Rapporteur is grateful to the Resident Coordinator Office and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights country office for the assistance extended to him prior to, during and after the visit.

6. The main objectives of the visit were to gain first-hand understanding of the realization of the right to development as well as the key challenges related to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right to development in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Special Rapporteur looked at the efforts undertaken by the country in different thematic areas and formulated practical recommendations for the Government and other stakeholders, including businesses, with regard to the realization of the right to development.

7. The Special Rapporteur was especially interested in learning more about the Government's actions in ensuring the active, free and meaningful participation of people in development-related decision-making as well as about the policies and programmes that are in place to address intersectional discrimination, including among marginalized and vulnerable communities.

8. Owing to the short time frame of a country visit, it was necessary to focus on the implementation of the right to development only through the lenses of key thematic issues.

9. The Special Rapporteur paid special attention to the gender dimension, considering the special development challenges faced by women and girls, including Indigenous women and girls. He focused on the situation of the most disadvantaged sections of society and paid particular attention to the challenges faced by minority groups, Indigenous Peoples and persons with disabilities in participating in, and enjoying, economic, social, cultural and political development.

II. General country context

10. Honduras presents a sociopolitical landscape, shaped by its rich cultural diversity, natural resource wealth and evolving democratic institutions, that is unique in the Central American region. As of 2024, the country's population was estimated at approximately 10.8 million people.[1] Honduras is divided into 18 departments, including Francisco Morazán – home to the national capital, Tegucigalpa – and Cortés, where San Pedro Sula, the nation's industrial hub, is located. The country features a mountainous interior constituting about 80 per cent of its territory, flanked by narrow coastal plains along the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. This diverse topography supports a range of ecosystems and economic activities, from agriculture and forestry in the highlands to fishing and tourism along the coasts.

11. As a party to all nine core international human rights treaties, Honduras has demonstrated its commitment to the international human rights framework. Moreover, the ratification of the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 1989 (No. 169) of the International Labour Organization underscores the country's recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly their rights to land, self-determination and cultural preservation. This commitment is complemented by the active engagement of Honduras with the universal periodic review process, including its most recent review in 2020, and the submission, in July 2024, of its third voluntary national review to track progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

12. The country's commitment to the right to development is reflected in its constitutional and legislative frameworks. The Constitution enshrines various rights pertinent to the right to development. Article 61, for example, guarantees all individuals the rights to life, individual safety, freedom, equality before the law, and access to property. Article 167 mandates that owners of farms, factories and other production centres located in rural areas establish and maintain basic education facilities for the benefit of workers' children, highlighting the State's emphasis on education as a cornerstone of development. Moreover, article 346 obligates the State to adopt measures to protect the rights and interests of the Indigenous communities in the country, especially with regard to the lands and forests in which they are settled. Such provisions collectively underscore the State's obligation to create conditions conducive to comprehensive development. This constitutional and legislative framework establishes a foundation for the realization of the right to development, aligning national laws with international human rights standards.

13. Honduras has faced a turbulent political trajectory, particularly following the 2009 coup d'état, which marked a pivotal moment in the country's history. The coup disrupted democratic governance, eroded trust in public institutions and significantly undermined the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Civic space was constrained in the aftermath, with reports of intimidation, violence and judicial harassment targeting human rights defenders, journalists and community leaders. These challenges are compounded by long-standing structural issues, such as corruption, weak rule of law and high levels of violence, which have contributed to institutional fragility and hindered progress towards inclusive development.

14. In addition to political instability, Honduras grapples with a deeply entrenched extractive model of development, which prioritizes the exploitation of natural resources at the expense of environmental sustainability and community rights. The extractive industries, including mining and agribusiness, have historically driven economic growth but have also been linked to significant human rights violations, particularly regarding Indigenous and Afrodescendant communities. Land disputes, forced displacement and environmental degradation are recurring concerns. Notably, Indigenous Peoples, who constitute a vital part of the country's cultural and social fabric, have faced systemic marginalization and inadequate protection of their rights.

15. Recognizing these challenges, the current Government has taken initial steps towards a more sustainable and inclusive development model. Recent policy measures, such as the

[1] See https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=HN (accessed on 4 July 2025).

abolition of the controversial employment and economic development zones, a ban on new extractive exploitation licences, and the prohibition of open-pit mining, signal a shift away from the extractive development model. These initiatives are aimed at protecting the environment, respecting community rights and promoting equitable resource management. The Government has also prioritized social programmes to address inequality and improve living conditions. Efforts such as reviving agriculture, providing free meals in schools, offering solidarity scholarships to low-income students and intensifying efforts to control violent crime are noteworthy examples aimed at fostering human development.

16. The geographical location of Honduras further shapes its development trajectory, as it serves as a country of origin, transit and entry for migrants. Economic hardship, violence and limited access to social services drive high levels of emigration, while the country's position as a transit hub places it at the intersection of complex migration dynamics in the region. Remittances from the diaspora represent a significant source of income, contributing to household welfare and national economic stability. However, over-reliance on remittances is not a sustainable development strategy, and highlights the need for long-term investments in domestic capacity-building, education and economic diversification. Moreover, the Government should consider ways to retain talent in the country.

17. The impact of climate change adds another layer of complexity to the country's development challenges. As one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change risks, Honduras frequently experiences extreme weather events, such as hurricanes and droughts, which exacerbate poverty and trigger food insecurity and displacement. These environmental vulnerabilities disproportionately affect rural and Indigenous communities, who are already marginalized in terms of access to resources and services. Climate adaptation and resilience-building policies, such as the State Policy for the Agrifood Sector of Honduras 2023–2043,[2] are therefore critical to ensuring the equitable realization of the right to development in Honduras.

18. The Government's stated commitment to transitioning towards a vibrant democracy and alternative development pathways is encouraging. However, the implementation of such policies requires sustained political will, institutional capacity and the meaningful participation of all stakeholders. Efforts to strengthen the rule of law, combat violence and corruption and ensure accountability are also essential to creating an enabling environment for development. Equally important is the empowerment of civil society, including human rights defenders, women, Indigenous Peoples and young people, who play a vital role in advocating for inclusive and rights-based approaches to development.

III. Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

19. Honduras has demonstrated a commendable commitment to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, prioritizing 13 out of the 17 goals as part of its national development framework, the bicentennial plan for 2022–2026. This alignment reflects the Government's recognition of the interconnected nature of sustainable development and its critical role in shaping the country's future. Honduras has introduced a multidimensional poverty index to measure poverty beyond income levels, incorporating factors such as health, education and living conditions. This tool provides a nuanced understanding of vulnerabilities and supports targeted interventions to address the root causes of poverty.

20. To advance poverty alleviation in alignment with Goal 1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, Honduras has implemented comprehensive social protection strategies, notably the "Better Life" voucher programme. This conditional cash transfer initiative is aimed at disrupting the intergenerational cycle of poverty by providing financial incentives to families in extreme poverty, contingent upon commitments to children's school attendance and adherence to health check-ups for pregnant women and young children. Beneficiaries can receive up to 10,000 lempiras (approximately $500),[3] facilitating improved access to

[2] Available at https://n9.cl/8228k.

[3] See https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2015/03/31/wb-honduras-access-health-education-services-extreme-poverty.

education and healthcare services. The programme has demonstrated tangible impacts. By 2018, it had provided cash transfers to approximately 234,000 extremely poor households in rural areas, with over 90 per cent of the grantees being women. Impact evaluations indicated a 17 per cent reduction in poverty rates among beneficiaries, a 27 per cent decrease in the poverty gap, a 7 per cent increase in school enrolment, and a 20 per cent reduction in child labour.

21. Honduras has taken significant steps to alleviate its national debt burden, aiming to create fiscal space for poverty reduction initiatives aligned with Goal 1. In 2023, the country's debt sustainability analysis indicated a moderate overall risk of debt distress, with a low risk of external debt distress, highlighting the importance of prudent fiscal policies to maintain this trajectory.[4] These efforts are crucial in reducing poverty and fostering inclusive economic growth, directly contributing to the achievement of Goal 1 in Honduras.

22. A notable good practice is the empowerment of local communities in leading sustainable development efforts. The Government, supported by the United Nations, has provided training and resources to municipalities such as San Nicolás and Intibucá, enabling them to engage in voluntary local reviews. This process involves open dialogues with local leaders and community members to identify challenges, gather data and create tailored strategies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, including poverty reduction. Such community-driven approaches ensure that interventions are contextually relevant and effectively address local needs.[5]

23. Despite these efforts, Honduras continues to face significant challenges in its quest to eliminate poverty. The poverty headcount ratio, at $3.65 per day, remains high, indicating that a substantial portion of the population lives below this threshold.[6] Chronic malnutrition affects one in four children, underscoring the persistent issue of food insecurity. The prevalence of undernourishment[7] further highlights the need for comprehensive strategies to ensure food availability and access for all citizens. The Special Rapporteur notes that as a result of public policies and investment in food security programmes, Honduras has managed to reduce food vulnerability by 10 per cent in the past two years (from 28 per cent in 2022 to 18 per cent in August 2024).

24. Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Hondurans, who constitute approximately 7 per cent of the population,[8] experience persistent exclusion and disproportionately high levels of poverty. These communities face systemic barriers, including discrimination, land dispossession, limited access to basic services and criminalization for defending their rights. Such disparities underscore the urgent need for targeted policies to ensure that no one is left behind.

25. While holding meetings in Choluteca, it came to the attention of the Special Rapporteur that climate change exacerbates these challenges, particularly in coastal regions such as Cedeño in Choluteca, where rising sea levels and coastal erosion threaten livelihoods and exacerbate poverty. Such environmental challenges highlight the intersection of poverty and climate vulnerability, necessitating integrated approaches to sustainable development.

26. The Government has taken proactive steps to promote good health and well-being (Goal 3) by strengthening healthcare access through community health programmes. Partnerships aimed at combating diseases such as malaria and dengue have further bolstered these efforts, ensuring better health outcomes for the population. Honduras has adopted several national strategies aimed at combating malaria and dengue, two major public health issues in the country. The national malaria elimination strategy, launched in January 2021, was aimed at eliminating malaria by 2023. The strategy emphasizes the importance of early

[4] See https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/002/2023/337/article-A002-en.xml.
[5] See https://jointsdgfund.org/article/honduras-empowers-local-communities-lead-sustainable-development.
[6] See https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/profiles/honduras/indicators.
[7] Ibid.
[8] See https://un-dco.org/stories/honduras-indigenous-and-afro-descendant-communities-lead-way-equality#:~:text=In%20Honduras%2C%20there%20are%20nine%20indigenous%20and%20Afro-descendant,peoples%20representing%207%20per%20cent%20of%20the%20population.

detection and treatment, with the introduction of rapid diagnostic tests and the widespread distribution of antimalarial medications.

27. Despite these efforts, Honduras continues to face significant challenges in disease control, which have an impact on the overall achievement of Goal 3. One major barrier is related to the resource limitations, with inadequate funding and infrastructure affecting the reach and sustainability of health programmes. Rural and remote areas, in particular, suffer from limited access to healthcare services, which exacerbates the problem of disease control.

28. During the visit, the Special Rapporteur received testimonies about the health system remaining underfunded and overstretched, especially in rural areas where healthcare infrastructure is insufficient to manage disease outbreaks. The country also faces challenges in terms of public awareness. While efforts are under way to educate the population on preventive measures, awareness gaps remain, particularly in marginalized and rural communities, where literacy levels are lower.

29. Regarding Goal 4, the Government has prioritized education by providing free public schooling for children aged 6 to 11, making primary education mandatory. This policy has led to an adult literacy rate of approximately 88.5 per cent.[9] Investments in building rural schools, providing school meals and improving educational infrastructure have enhanced access to quality education for children in marginalized communities.

30. Despite these advancements, poverty remains a critical barrier, with many families unable to afford uniforms and school supplies, resulting in children leaving school to support household incomes in the rural communities. As of 2023, approximately 21 per cent of primary school-aged children in Honduras were out of school,[10] although the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reports that over 1 million children, representing about 40 per cent of school-age children, are out of school in Honduras.[11] Gender disparities also affect educational attainment, for example, asking girls to withdraw from school to assist in domestic work, on the basis of the perception that boys have better employment prospects. This contributes to lower attendance rates for girls compared to boys.[12]

31. Infrastructure deficiencies further hinder educational quality. Many schools lack adequate facilities and teaching materials, and teachers often receive low wages and insufficient training. Natural disasters, such as tropical storms and hurricanes, have destroyed numerous schools, exacerbating the infrastructural challenges. The Special Rapporteur notes that the Government has rebuilt more than 5,500 schools as part of a plan to rehabilitate 12,000 schools that had fallen into a state of disrepair.[13]

32. Access to potable water remains a critical issue, impeding progress across multiple Sustainable Development Goals. Testimonies from rural communities revealed that over 45 per cent of the population lacks access to safe drinking water. Rural and Indigenous populations are disproportionately affected, with recurrent droughts and erratic rainfall exacerbating the problem. Climate change further complicates water availability, creating a pressing need for sustainable water management solutions. The Special Rapporteur notes the commitment of the Government in improving access to drinking water in Honduras, including in Indigenous communities, through projects such as the "Our Roots" programme.

33. In the realm of environmental sustainability (Goals 13 and 15), Honduras has initiated reforestation projects, improved waste management systems and invested in renewable energy initiatives. These measures are crucial for addressing climate change and preserving the country's rich biodiversity. Efforts to reduce inequalities (Goal 10) are also evident, with programmes empowering Indigenous communities and women through microfinance, training initiatives and capacity-building activities.

[9] See https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/literacy-rate-by-country.

[10] See https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.UNER.ZS?locations=HN (accessed on 4 July 2025).

[11] See https://www.unicef.org/media/152416/file/Honduras-2023-COAR.pdf.

[12] See https://www.education-inequalities.org/countries/honduras.

[13] See https://n9.cl/k2n1z0.

34. Corruption and systemic impunity remain significant barriers to sustainable development in Honduras. The country ranked 154th out of 180 countries in Transparency International's 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index, with a score of 23,[14] indicating a pervasive perception of public sector corruption. High-profile corruption cases with no accountability erode public trust and hinder efforts to achieve Goal 16.[15]

35. A significant challenge hindering the effective implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals in Honduras is the lack of accurate and disaggregated data. While the Government has made progress in aligning national development plans with the Goals, the absence of comprehensive data disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, age, geographical location and socioeconomic status limits the ability to accurately assess progress and address inequalities. This issue is particularly acute for marginalized groups, including Indigenous Peoples, Afro-Hondurans and rural communities, who often face the most severe development challenges. Without such data, it becomes difficult to design targeted interventions or measure the real impact of policies aimed at reducing disparities and achieving the overarching goal of leaving no one behind.

IV. Key thematic issues

A. Right to development of Indigenous Peoples

36. Indigenous Peoples in Honduras face unique and profound challenges in realizing the right to development, deeply rooted in centuries of colonization and systemic marginalization. Historical processes have led to the usurpation of Indigenous territories, disruption of their cultural practices and the erosion of their rights to self-determination and participation. Compounding this, the extractive model of economic development, which prioritizes resource exploitation, often disregards the rights of Indigenous communities. Testimonies from different Indigenous communities underscored the urgent need for structural reforms to address these challenges and uphold Indigenous Peoples' rights, including the right to free, prior and informed consent.

37. The Special Rapporteur notes that the Government of Honduras has taken several steps to protect Indigenous Peoples' rights and address development gaps. National development strategies, including the bicentennial plan for 2022–2026, emphasize inclusive development and sustainable practices, and specific programmes for Indigenous Peoples and Afrodescendants in Honduras aimed at reducing socioeconomic disparities and promoting the participation of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making processes have been implemented. Moreover, the 2015 Law on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators and Justice Officials includes provisions to safeguard Indigenous leaders and activists. However, implementation of this law remains inconsistent across the country. The Special Rapporteur remains concerned about the systemic barriers that limit the effectiveness of these policies, leaving Indigenous communities vulnerable to marginalization and rights violations.

38. One of the most pressing issues facing Indigenous peoples in Honduras is the usurpation of their lands for extractive industries and economic development projects; these activities often proceed without respecting the communities' right to free, prior and informed consent. Access to and recognition of ancestral lands remain critical to the development and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples. The Special Rapporteur is encouraged by the presidential initiative to hand over definitive freehold titles covering 9,604 hectares to 27 Miskito and Garifuna communities in the municipality of Juan Francisco Bulnes in Gracias a Dios, benefiting 23,000 inhabitants of the Rio Plátano biosphere reserve.[16]

39. In Honduras, Indigenous Peoples collectively hold vast areas of territory, much of which is unregistered or under dispute. The Government has initiated some land-titling processes in collaboration with Indigenous councils, including recent agreements with

[14] See https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2024.

[15] See https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals/peace-justice-and-strong-institutions.

[16] See https://n9.cl/2kdea.

Garifuna communities to secure communal land rights.[17] However, many Indigenous communities lack formal land titles, leaving them vulnerable to land-grabbing and encroachment.

40. The case of the Lenca communities in La Paz, La Esperanza and Siguatepeque, who shared their experiences with the Special Rapporteur, exemplifies a systemic disregard for Indigenous rights, revealing ongoing displacement caused by large-scale projects, such as hydroelectric dams and mining operations, often approved without free, prior and informed consent.[18] Hydroelectric projects, such as the controversial Agua Zarca dam, have not only disrupted livelihoods but have also led to violent confrontations, including the assassination of prominent Indigenous leader Berta Cáceres in 2016.[19]

41. In La Paz and Choluteca, where many extractive industries are concentrated, the Special Rapporteur received several testimonies regarding the devastating effects of mining activities. Pollution from mining operations has contaminated water sources, undermining public health and destroying local agricultural systems. For communities whose livelihoods depend on these natural resources, consequences are catastrophic, perpetuating cycles of poverty and food insecurity.

42. Additionally, Indigenous Peoples in Honduras experience disproportionately high levels of poverty, with an estimated 80 per cent living below the poverty line. This economic marginalization is compounded by limited access to basic services such as access to education, healthcare, housing, water, electricity, roads and the Internet.

43. It also came to the attention of the Special Rapporteur that Indigenous children face systemic barriers to accessing quality education, with dropout rates significantly higher than the national average.[20] Many schools in Indigenous areas lack adequate funding, trained teachers and culturally appropriate curricula. Bilingual education, which is critical for preserving Indigenous languages and cultural identity, remains underdeveloped and underresourced.

44. Furthermore, healthcare disparities are another major concern for Indigenous communities who have limited access to healthcare facilities, resulting in higher rates of preventable disease, malnutrition and maternal mortality. Indigenous women face increased risks of complications, such as haemorrhage, eclampsia and infection, and unsafe abortions, owing to limited access to maternal health services, geographical isolation, lack of trained health providers and cultural barriers, resulting in disproportionately high rates of maternal mortality. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic further exposed these disparities, as healthcare resources in rural and Indigenous areas were severely constrained.

45. Many Indigenous households lack access to safe drinking water.[21] This limited access is further compounded by contamination linked to industrial activities, which further restricts access to natural water sources.

46. The Special Rapporteur is also concerned that cultural discrimination, racism and stigmatization further hinder the participation of Indigenous Peoples in public life in Honduras. Indigenous people in Honduras are often excluded from national and regional decision-making processes related to land use, development and natural resource management. Traditional governance structures, such as Indigenous councils, are frequently sidelined in favour of State institutions or private sector interests. This exclusion not only violates Indigenous Peoples' right to participate in decisions affecting their lives but also undermines the sustainability and legitimacy of development initiatives.

[17] See https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2017/10/30/setting-a-historical-precedent-for-land-rights-in-honduras-improving-decentralized-land-administration-services.

[18] See https://rightsindevelopment.org/wp-content/uploads/CASE-5-Agua-Zarca-ENG.pdf.

[19] See https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2016/04/berta-caceres-murder-un-experts-renew-call-honduras-end-impunity.

[20] See https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2022/Honduras.pdf.

[21] See https://gopa-group-us.com/news/enhancing-access-water-and-sanitation-strengthens-indigenous-resilience-honduras#:~:text=The%20extreme%20remoteness%20of%20the%20Moskitia%20region%2C%20where,infrastructure%20that%20exists%20stems%20solely%20from%20humanitarian%20aid.

47. It came to the attention of the Special Rapporteur that Indigenous leaders have consistently advocated for greater recognition of their governance systems and for the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in policymaking. However, their efforts are often met with resistance and, in some cases, criminalization. The Special Rapporteur noted with concern the increasing risks faced by Indigenous leaders who defend their territories, including threats, violence and judicial harassment.

B. Gender dimensions of the right to development

48. When conducting country visits, the Special Rapporteur pays particular attention to the conditions of women and girls in the context of the right to development. In Honduras, women and girls continue to face significant challenges, exacerbated by intersecting forms of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and sexual orientation.

49. The Special Rapporteur takes note of the several measures taken in recent years to promote gender equality and eliminate gender-based discrimination and violence. The Government created the Ministry of Women's Affairs, replacing the former National Institute for Women. The Government also repealed decision No. 2744-2009, which had prohibited access to emergency contraceptive pills. Moreover, it established a committee on gender-sensitive budgeting. The Special Rapporteur also learned that the Ministry has a presence in all ministries, in order to mainstream gender across all decision-making, and he is encouraged that the Government adopted the National Plan to Combat Violence against Women 2023–2033.

50. In 2023, Honduras was ranked 112th out of 172 countries on the Gender Inequality Index and in 2022, ranked 82nd out of 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap index.[22] Although the overall homicide rate in 2023 has come down as compared to 2022, 380 violent deaths of women were reported in 2023 – an increase of 24.2 per cent as compared to 2022. The Special Rapporteur learned from civil society organizations that women continue to experience domestic violence and face discrimination as well as sexual harassment in both the public and private spheres in Honduras. It also came to his attention during the visit that violence against women and girls remains a pervasive issue in the country, with high rates of domestic violence and sexual assault, and that femicide rates in the country remain the highest in the Latin American region, with 6.2 cases per 100,000 habitants.[23]

51. In addition, patriarchal and religious norms continue to hinder progress towards gender equality. In terms of measures taken to address these issues, the Government has launched initiatives such as the national plan for gender equality and equity and the comprehensive strategy to combat violence against women. However, challenges remain in fully implementing these policies, including insufficient resources and political resistance.

52. Women and girls also face systemic discrimination, which limits their participation in education, employment and decision-making processes. Efforts to combat gender-based violence have been insufficient. While some support services exist for victims, they are often underfunded and inaccessible to many women. Furthermore, the lack of effective prosecution of perpetrators and the slow pace of justice reform undermine efforts to end impunity.

53. The tragic killing of Berta Cáceres in 2016 serves as a stark reminder of the grave risks faced by women human rights defenders. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the ruling of the Criminal Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice issued in November 2024, in which the Court upheld the sentences of seven individuals convicted for the 2016 murder of Ms. Cáceres and the attempted murder of Mexican activist Gustavo Castro. Among those whose sentences were confirmed is Roberto David Castillo, a former president of Desarrollos Energéticos S.A., who was found guilty as a co-perpetrator of the crime.[24]

[22] See https://data.unwomen.org/global-database-on-violence-against-women/country-profile/Honduras/country-snapshot (accessed on 4 July 2025).

[23] See https://unsdg.un.org/latest/stories/violence-against-women-other-pandemic-impacting-honduras#:~:text=Honduras%20has%20the%20highest%20femicide%20rate%20in%20the,than%20240%20women%20have%20lost%20their%20lives%20violently.

[24] See https://copinh.org/2025/03/press-release-no-5-2025/.

54. The Special Rapporteur remains concerned regarding the lack of accountability of the actors behind the crime and the ongoing threats faced by other women human rights defenders across the country.

55. According to the testimonies received during the visit, access to justice for victims of gender-based violence also remains a significant challenge. The Special Rapporteur is concerned that the justice system often fails to adequately investigate and prosecute perpetrators, and that victims face numerous barriers to accessing justice, including fear of retaliation, lack of access to legal aid, and discriminatory attitudes within the judicial system.

56. In addition, economic inequality further exacerbates the challenges faced by women and girls in Honduras. The rates of teenage pregnancy are high (71 per cent in 2022 for girls aged between 15 and 19 years old),[25] contributing to the interruption of education for many adolescents and limiting their future economic opportunities. Women face considerable barriers to economic participation, including limited access to education, employment and financial resources. Initiatives such as the establishment of the Asociación Coordinadora de Mujeres Campesinas de La Paz, which supports women-led businesses, demonstrate the potential for economic empowerment and self-reliance of women. However, more needs to be done to scale up such initiatives and ensure their sustainability.

57. Despite some progress, discriminatory laws and policies continue to hinder women's full and equal participation in all spheres of life. For instance, the lack of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, including access to safe and legal abortion – which is only permitted in cases of rape or incest, or when the women's life is at risk – severely limits women's autonomy and decision-making power. While access to contraceptive pills has improved, concerns remain regarding the availability and quality of sexual and reproductive health services, particularly for women in rural and marginalized communities. Restrictive abortion laws continue to have a significant negative impact on women's health and well-being. These restrictions have significant negative impacts on women's and girls' health, as evidenced by the high rate of adolescent pregnancy.[26]

58. A critical obstacle to addressing these challenges effectively is the severe lack of disaggregated data. This data gap hinders a comprehensive understanding of the specific challenges faced by different groups of women and girls, including Indigenous women, Afro-Honduran women and women with disabilities. Without this crucial data, it is difficult to design and implement targeted interventions that effectively address the unique needs and vulnerabilities of these marginalized groups.

C. Land rights, privatization and social conflicts

59. Access to land rights in Honduras is marked by profound inequalities, tenure insecurity and persistent social conflicts, as observed by the Special Rapporteur during the country visit. The highly unequal distribution of land disproportionately affects marginalized communities, particularly Indigenous Peoples and Afrodescendant groups living in rural areas. Weak land tenure security undermines their rights to housing, livelihoods and development, perpetuating cycles of poverty and exclusion.

60. One of the most pressing concerns documented during the visit was the prevalence of land usurpation, forced evictions and the systematic criminalization of land and environmental defenders. The Special Rapporteur received numerous testimonies from communities in El Progreso, Agua Blanca Sur and the Bajo Aguán region, among other locations, detailing violent land dispossession, intimidation and targeted attacks. These actions not only violate the fundamental right to property but also have devastating consequences on food security, access to essential services and the overall well-being of affected communities.

[25] See https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/teenage-pregnancy-rates-by-country (accessed on 4 July 2025).

[26] See https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/latest/honduras-bringing-sexual-and-reproductive-health-care-community.

61. Honduras remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world for land and environmental defenders. According to Global Witness, at least 160 land and environmental defenders were killed between 2012 and 2022, making Honduras one of the deadliest places for those resisting land grabbing and extractive industries. The recent case of Juan López, an environmental activist assassinated in September 2024 in Tocoa, exemplifies the grave risks faced by those advocating for their territorial rights. The Special Rapporteur notes that the alleged author of and accomplices in this crime are awaiting trial.[27]

62. Despite the country's obligations under international law, the right to free, prior and informed consent is frequently disregarded in development projects. Testimonies collected from Indigenous and Garifuna communities revealed that hundreds of licences for mining, hydropower, tourism and agribusiness projects have been issued without meaningful consultation with affected populations. In many cases, State agencies have prioritized private corporate interests over the rights and livelihoods of local communities, exacerbating social tensions and eroding trust in government institutions.

63. The lack of compliance with the right to free, prior and informed consent has led to widespread resistance movements, often met with repression. Indigenous communities, particularly the Lenca and Garifuna, have been at the forefront of these struggles, resisting projects that threaten their ancestral lands and ways of life. The emblematic case of the Garifuna communities in Tela and Trujillo, where large-scale tourism developments have encroached upon traditional territories, highlights the systemic violations of free, prior and informed consent and Indigenous land rights.

64. In the Bajo Aguán region, where violent land conflicts between agribusiness corporations and small-scale farmers have persisted for decades, the failure to implement protective measures has led to over 150 murders of land rights activists since 2009, most of which remain unresolved.

65. The Special Rapporteur is also concerned that the governance mechanisms responsible for adjudicating land rights often lack transparency and accountability. Allegations of acts of corruption are widespread, and access to adequate legal recourse for affected communities is severely limited. Consequently, this creates a climate of impunity, encouraging land grabbers and undermining the rule of law. The absence of effective mechanisms for resolving land disputes contributes to ongoing social conflict and perpetuates a cycle of dispossession and injustice.

66. Legal frameworks intended to protect land rights are weakly enforced, and judicial processes are often biased against Indigenous and rural communities. Reports indicate that agrarian and land dispute resolution bodies frequently fail to provide impartial adjudication, leaving communities without effective legal recourse.[28]

67. The extensive privatization of public lands, particularly in regions with high tourism potential, agricultural productivity or natural resource wealth, has had a devastating impact on local communities. Coastal areas, including beaches historically used by local communities for subsistence, have been increasingly encroached upon by private enterprises. For example, projects along the Gulf of Fonseca have displaced hundreds of communities, restricted access to fishing grounds, and undermined the economic and cultural rights of those populations.

68. The expansion of large-scale agribusiness ventures, such as in the palm oil industry, which covers over 190,000 hectares, and sugarcane plantations, has displaced smallholder farmers and Indigenous communities from their ancestral lands. These developments often lead to environmental degradation, including deforestation, soil erosion and water pollution, further exacerbating the vulnerabilities of local communities, leaving affected populations without sustainable alternatives.

69. The Special Rapporteur is further concerned that mining and extractive projects in Honduras have become major drivers of land conflicts and synonymous with environmental

[27] See https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr37/9306/2025/en/.

[28] See https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/15/honduras-submission-un-committee-economic-social-and-cultural-rights.

degradation, social unrest and attacks against environmental defenders. Environmental impact assessments are often conducted in a superficial manner, failing to adequately address the social and cultural impacts on affected communities. These assessments frequently serve as a mere tick-box exercise, leaving communities powerless to resist encroachments on their territories and denying their right to self-determination.

70. The case of Choluteca, where extractive and renewable energy projects have led to forced evictions and the pollution of vital water sources, exemplifies the devastating consequences of poorly regulated extractive activities. Extractive and renewable energy projects in this region have disrupted traditional ways of life, leading to forced evictions, pollution of water sources and the destruction of critical ecosystems. The local population has frequently mobilized to resist these projects, but their efforts are often met with criminalization, stigmatization and violence.

71. Land-grabbing has had a profound and devastating impact on Indigenous communities in Honduras, particularly the Garifuna and Lenca. For the Garifuna communities, their ancestral lands along the Caribbean coast hold immense cultural significance. These lands are inextricably linked to their unique cultural identity, providing the foundation for their traditional livelihoods, such as fishing and agriculture, and their deep connection to their ancestral spirits. Land dispossession threatens to erode this cultural foundation, severing their ties to their land and their cultural heritage.

72. Indigenous communities possess invaluable traditional knowledge about sustainable land management, biodiversity conservation and traditional medicine. Land-grabbing practices disrupt these traditional practices, leading to the loss of this vital knowledge and threatening the long-term sustainability of local ecosystems. Land dispossession can force them to rely on market-based food systems, which can be more expensive and less nutritious, further exacerbating food insecurity.

73. The Office of the National Commissioner for Human Rights plays a crucial role in preventing and addressing land-related social conflicts. By effectively utilizing early warning systems, the Office can proactively mitigate tensions and prevent violence. By proactively engaging with all stakeholders, including government officials and community representatives, the Office can facilitate dialogues and identify development projects that may have significant social and environmental impacts and assess the potential for conflict with communities.

D. Environmental pollution and climate change

74. The Special Rapporteur is encouraged that Honduras has made significant strides in certain areas of environmental governance and climate action, demonstrating a commitment to addressing both environmental sustainability and human rights. One example is the country's nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement, submitted in 2021, which include pledges to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by 16 per cent by 2030, focusing on sectors such as energy, forestry, agriculture, waste and industrial processing.[29] These include plans to enhance climate resilience through reforestation and the development of renewable energy. In addition, the country has prioritized conservation efforts that aim to protect its rich biodiversity, particularly through reforestation projects designed to mitigate the effects of deforestation and climate change through the implementation of a national reforestation programme.

75. Honduras has a forest cover of 56.8 per cent,[30] which plays an important role in carbon sequestration and maintaining the balance of its ecosystems. The United Nations Development Programme is supporting the Government in convening an early recovery round table and in updating the Law on the National Risk Management System. The country has also begun implementing policies aimed at strengthening climate resilience, particularly

[29] See https://www.undp.org/es/honduras/noticias/honduras-releases-new-national-climate-pledge-under-paris-agreement.

[30] See https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/forest-cover-by-country (accessed on 4 July 2025).

in vulnerable communities. These efforts are part of a broader international commitment to sustainable development that recognizes the critical intersection between environmental protection and human rights.

76. Nevertheless, the Special Rapporteur raised several concerns related to environmental pollution, governance and climate change that threaten to undermine the right to development for many Hondurans. One major concern is the process of environmental impact assessments for development projects in Honduras. Currently, these assessments are conducted by third-party entities, including private consultants or firms with vested interests in the projects they evaluate. This practice raises serious doubts about the objectivity and transparency of the assessments. Third-party entities may be incentivized to prioritize the interests of developers over the protection of local communities and the environment, potentially leading to biased and incomplete assessments. Such conflicts of interest compromise the credibility of the entire process, leaving the public vulnerable to poorly planned projects that may have long-term negative consequences.

77. Although Honduras boasts a remarkable level of forest cover, plastic pollution is a growing environmental issue that requires urgent attention. During the visit, the Special Rapporteur observed significant amounts of plastic waste in both rural and urban areas. The current management of plastic waste seems inadequate, and the country lacks comprehensive strategies to address this issue. Honduras has yet to implement an effective national policy to curb plastic production, consumption and disposal, which exacerbates the environmental damage caused by plastic pollution. The absence of an integrated waste management system, including recycling and waste-reduction initiatives, is leading to severe environmental degradation.

78. Another growing issue is climate change, which poses an increasing threat to Honduras. As one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in Central America, Honduras faces frequent natural disasters, such as tropical storms, hurricanes, floods, landslides and droughts. These events disrupt local economies, agriculture and human livelihoods. In the coastal areas around the Gulf of Fonseca, rising sea levels are exacerbating coastal erosion, saltwater intrusion and flooding. Local communities, including Indigenous and Afrodescendant populations, are facing forced displacement owing to these environmental impacts. In the region of Choluteca, the Special Rapporteur met with displaced families who shared their struggles with relocation, including the lack of adequate support from the Government.

79. Droughts in the agricultural regions of La Paz are diminishing crop yields and further exacerbating food insecurity. Smallholder farmers are increasingly reliant on imported food, which not only strains the national economy but also deepens poverty and inequality. The lack of sustainable water management practices, along with recurring dry spells, is making it harder for farmers to access sufficient water for irrigation, further jeopardizing food production and agricultural livelihoods.

E. Participation in decision-making processes

80. The right to active, free and meaningful participation in development decision-making is a fundamental element of the Declaration on the Right to Development. The acknowledgment of this right underscores that all individuals and communities must have the opportunity to influence policies, programmes and projects that affect their lives. While the Government has made efforts to foster participatory governance, systemic barriers continue to prevent effective and inclusive participation, particularly for marginalized communities.

81. The Special Rapporteur is encouraged that the Government of Honduras has implemented mechanisms such as open community meetings (*cabildos abiertos*) and popular consultations (*consultas populares*) to promote civic engagement. These platforms are designed to facilitate dialogue between citizens and authorities, allowing for the expression of concerns and contributions to decision-making processes. For instance, local governments have organized public forums where community members can voice their opinions on various development initiatives.

82. However, marginalized groups, including young people, women, Indigenous Peoples, Afro-Hondurans, rural communities and persons with disabilities, often face systemic exclusion owing to entrenched social norms, economic disparities and institutional barriers. During the visit, the Special Rapporteur received testimonies demonstrating structural inequalities and discrimination that further limited their ability to influence policies that have an impact on their lives.

83. Digital participation remains a particular challenge in rural areas. According to the National Institute of Statistics, as of 2022, only 59.71 per cent of the Honduran population aged 5 and above had access to the Internet, reflecting an increase of only 41 percentage points over 10 years.[31] These figures indicate that nearly half of the population still lacks Internet access. As previously mentioned, corruption and a lack of trust in institutions further hinder public participation. The perception that government decisions favour private interests over public welfare discourages many from engaging in participatory processes. In addition, the Special Rapporteur noted the absence of transparent and inclusive decision-making mechanisms; this can exacerbate public distrust, creating further obstacles to effective civic engagement.

84. The criminalization of community leaders and human rights defenders, particularly those advocating for environmental protection and Indigenous land rights, remains a major obstacle to the participation in decision making.

F. Role of businesses

85. In his 2023 report to the General Assembly,[32] the Special Rapporteur emphasized the pivotal role businesses play in realizing the right to development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Governments often incentivize businesses through tax exemptions, land concessions, the establishment of special economic zones, and bilateral investment agreements to attract foreign investment. However, it is crucial that these incentives promote inclusive and sustainable development and are granted only to companies adhering to responsible business conduct aligned with international standards.

86. During the visit, the Special Rapporteur met with representatives of the Honduran Private Enterprise Council and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Cortés to discuss the role of business in realizing the right to development and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Special Rapporteur appreciates that the Council is aware of international standards such as the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and has been encouraging its members to operate in line with these standards, including by offering online courses and sharing good practices through regular bulletins. In addition, the Special Rapporteur was informed that the Council has also engaged with the National Commission for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals. During his meeting with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Cortés, the Special Rapporteur heard about various social responsibility measures the Chamber has taken, including promoting inclusive employment and mitigating climate change. The Chamber also explained that it provided assistance to companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, in accessing finance.

87. However, it seems that the commitment to respect human rights at the business association level has not yet translated into concrete action by individual companies in Honduras, as civil society organizations and Indigenous communities have raised serious concerns about various development projects. The Special Rapporteur considers that all business organizations and companies operating in Honduras need to take their human rights responsibilities seriously, in particular vis-à-vis respecting Indigenous Peoples' right to free, prior and informed consent, and collaborating with the Government and civil society organizations to leave no one behind and to preserve the biodiversity.

88. In Honduras, previous administrations have granted extensive tax exemptions to companies, established employment and economic development zones, issued mining licences without meaningful community consultations, and conferred rights on foreign

[31] See https://www.statista.com/statistics/1055487/internet-penetration-honduras/.
[32] A/78/160.

investors through investment agreements in ways that have undermined human rights – including those of Indigenous Peoples – and environmental protections. Consequently, Honduras is experiencing social conflicts, particularly concerning the usurpation of Indigenous Peoples' ancestral lands, as comprehensively described in the present report. The country also struggles to raise adequate financial resources to fulfil its human rights obligations.

89. The abrupt suspension of operations by Delta Cortés, affecting the livelihoods of about 1,200 workers, illustrates the problems with the current development model. While the company benefited from government tax exemptions, it failed to respect workers' rights, and the Government failed to protect those rights. Moreover, the police used excessive force, including tear gas and water cannons, against workers who were protesting peacefully.

90. Between 2023 and 2024, Honduras faced at least 14 arbitration claims from foreign investors, including by Honduras Próspera Inc., demanding billions of dollars for the cancellation of extractive or energy projects or employment and economic development zones.[33] The arbitration claim by Honduras Próspera Inc. against the Government of Honduras under The Dominican Republic – Central America – United States Free Trade Agreement, seeking $10.7 billion in damages for alleged expropriation and breach of legal stability guarantees,[34] is emblematic of the problem with the unequal nature of existing investment agreements and the investor-State dispute settlement mechanism. The Special Rapporteur regrets that despite multiple efforts to arrange a meeting with Honduras Próspera Inc., no such meeting with the company could be held. It is worth noting that in September 2024, the Supreme Court of Honduras declared the legal framework of the employment and economic development zones unconstitutional, invalidating the existing zones,[35] including Próspera on the island of Roatán. In February 2024, Honduras formally denounced the Convention on the Settlement of Investment Disputes between States and Nationals of Other States.[36]

V. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

91. **The Special Rapporteur was encouraged by the high level of constructive engagement he had with various authorities, as well as the openness of the dialogue with different stakeholders, which has been instrumental in fostering a meaningful exchange of perspectives. This collaborative spirit reflects a willingness to address pressing issues and engage in discussions aimed at shaping a model for more inclusive, sustainable and participatory development for the country.**

92. **Systemic discrimination against Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Hondurans affecting large segments of the population, law and order problems, land conflicts, weak environmental governance, and the adverse effects of climate change exacerbate existing vulnerabilities. Attacks against human rights defenders also are an issue – no one should face intimidation or death for defending nature. On the economic front, a high national debt burden and arbitration claims by foreign investors impose further constraints on the country's development trajectory.**

93. **Despite these challenges, the Special Rapporteur also witnessed encouraging signs of progress, namely, the Government's commitment to moving away from an extractive and exclusionary development model. The creation of space for civil society organizations to voice their concerns is a positive step towards participatory**

[33] See https://isds-americalatina.org/honduras-eng/.
[34] See https://www.prospera.co/news/10-775-billion-claim-filed-against-government-of-honduras.
[35] See https://tnh.gob.hn/nacional/csj-declara-inconstitucionales-las-zedes/ (in Spanish).
[36] See https://icsid.worldbank.org/news-and-events/communiques/honduras-denounces-icsid-convention.

governance. However, translating these commitments into tangible, long-term actions requires a well-defined, long-term and cross-party strategy.

94. **The Special Rapporteur believes that Honduras should embrace a model of planet-centred participatory development, which balances economic growth with social inclusion and environmental sustainability. To operationalize this vision, he suggests the development of a road map to 2040: a comprehensive framework that outlines clear short-, medium- and long-term goals towards inclusive, sustainable and participatory development. The road map should be the result of a broad, consultative process involving key stakeholders, including the Government, businesses and civil society, to ensure collective ownership and commitment.**

95. **The United Nations country team in Honduras could play a crucial role in facilitating the development of this road map, providing technical expertise, fostering dialogue among stakeholders and ensuring alignment with international human rights and sustainable development commitments. A well-structured road map could serve as a guiding document, not only for the current Administration but also for future Governments, helping to maintain policy continuity and long-term strategic planning.**

B. Recommendations

96. **Regarding the Sustainable Development Goals, the Special Rapporteur recommends that the Government:**

(a) **Strengthen social protection programmes, enhance data collection for informed decision-making and implement climate-resilient development strategies to ensure that progress in poverty reduction is inclusive and sustainable;**

(b) **Address poverty, gender inequality and infrastructural deficits to ensure equitable and quality education for all; in addition, the Government should prioritize investments in quality education at all levels, in particular expanding access to education in rural and underserved areas to reduce the dropout rates, and enhance vocational training to equip young people with skills relevant to emerging industries;**

(c) **Adopt innovative strategies to mobilize resources without exacerbating the Government's debt burden, through measures such as introducing progressive taxation, negotiating debt swaps for climate action and seeking long-term concessional loans or grants from development partners;**

(d) **Invest in disaggregated data collection and analysis to identify gaps, track progress and develop evidence-based policies, by increasing funding for the National Institute of Statistics to conduct regular and inclusive surveys that capture disaggregated data across all Sustainable Development Goal indicators;**

(e) **Strengthen collaboration with the United Nations and development partners to harness technical assistance and capacity-building to realize the Sustainable Development Goals;**

(f) **Establish a centralized and publicly accessible database for the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals in order to enhance accountability and enable evidence-based decision-making;**

(g) **Strengthen institutional capacities, particularly regarding access to justice and accountability mechanisms, to restore public trust in governance.**

97. **Concerning the rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Special Rapporteur recommends that the Government:**

(a) **Strengthen land rights and secure land titles for Indigenous communities and ensure the effective implementation of legislation related to land rights and territorial integrity;**

(b) **Promote free, prior and informed consent by ensuring that development projects are designed and implemented with the full and effective participation of**

Indigenous Peoples, respecting their rights to free, prior and informed consent and self-determination;

(c) **Institutionalize the role of Indigenous councils in decision-making processes related to land use, natural resource management and development projects;**

(d) **Cease the criminalization of peaceful activities by Indigenous leaders and advocates defending Indigenous rights;**

(e) **Address socioeconomic disparities experienced by Indigenous Peoples by investing in provisions for education, healthcare, potable water, electricity, Internet access and other essential services for them, mobilizing resources through public-private partnerships and promoting economic development opportunities that are culturally appropriate and sustainable;**

(f) **Promote the recognition of and respect for Indigenous cultures, languages and knowledge systems;**

(g) **Strengthen political participation by ensuring meaningful Indigenous representation in decision-making processes at all levels;**

(h) **Provide vocational training and microcredit programmes to foster entrepreneurship and sustainable economic development within Indigenous communities;**

(i) **Develop targeted initiatives to support traditional livelihoods, such as farming, fishing and handicrafts, that are integral to Indigenous cultures.**

98. **Regarding gender inequalities, the Special Rapporteur recommends that the Government:**

(a) **Ratify and implement the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) in order to provide a stronger legal framework for protection against gender-based violence and harassment;**

(b) **Strengthen the justice system by investing in gender-sensitivity training for judges and prosecutors and establishing specialized courts to handle cases of gender-based violence, and provide adequate support to victims throughout the justice process;**

(c) **Improve access to sexual and reproductive health and rights by expanding access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning, safe abortion, maternal and child healthcare, and sex education programmes in schools;**

(d) **Promote women's economic empowerment through access to education and skills training for girls and women, support women-owned businesses through access to credit, markets and technical assistance, and implement policies to address the gender pay gap and ensure equal opportunities in the workplace;**

(e) **Collect and utilize disaggregated data to understand the specific challenges faced by different groups of women and girls, including Indigenous women, Afro-Honduran women and women living with disabilities;**

(f) **Strengthen the protection of women human rights defenders, which includes investigating and prosecuting those responsible for attacks on women rights defenders and providing adequate protection and support for women defenders at risk;**

(g) **Actively involve women's rights organizations in the development and implementation of policies and programmes that affect women and girls and ensure that the voices and perspectives of women and girls are heard and considered in all decision-making processes.**

99. **On land issues, the Special Rapporteur recommends that the Government:**

(a) **Conduct a comprehensive review of the existing regulatory framework concerning land governance to ensure that it complies with international human rights standards; such a framework should include robust safeguards against forced evictions,**

guarantee access to information and effective participation for affected communities and ensure compliance with the principle of free, prior and informed consent;

(b) **Amend or repeal Legislative Decree No. 93-2021 to reduce the illegitimate restrictions on land rights defenders;**

(c) **Cease the issuance of land concessions that violate international human rights standards, and include a requirement of meaningful consultation with affected communities;**

(d) **Strengthen the capacity of the judiciary to effectively address land disputes impartially and ensure access to justice for affected communities, including by providing legal aid to marginalized communities facing land-rights violations;**

(e) **Strengthen anti-corruption measures to prevent and address corruption in land deals and increase transparency in land administration and decision-making processes;**

(f) **Invest in early warning systems, including through mechanisms such as the Office of the National Commissioner for Human Rights, to identify and address potential land conflicts before any escalation, including by: (i) proactively engaging all stakeholders to facilitate dialogue, promote understanding and seek mutually agreeable solutions; and (ii) monitoring the implementation of development projects, investigating allegations of human rights violations and documenting evidence of land grabs and other abuses;**

(g) **Investigate and prosecute those responsible for attacks on those defending their land;**

(h) **Support sustainable land management practices, including agroecology and community-based forest management, to ensure the long-term sustainability of land resources;**

(i) **Support the capacity of community-based organizations to advocate for their land rights, participate in decision-making processes and effectively monitor development projects;**

(j) **Enhance oversight of extractive industries to prevent environmental destruction and social harm.**

100. **Regarding environmental pollution and climate change, the Special Rapporteur recommends that the Government:**

(a) **Strengthen the environmental impact assessment governance by establishing a national regime that maintains direct government oversight over the process and ensure that such assessments are conducted impartially and all environmental, social and human rights considerations are considered;**

(b) **Integrate social assessments into the environmental impact assessment process, involving consultations with local communities, including Indigenous Peoples, to fully understand the potential risks and impacts on their rights, livelihoods and environment;**

(c) **Implement comprehensive strategies to combat plastic pollution, from design to disposal and recycling, by developing a national policy on plastic waste reduction;**

(d) **Invest in climate adaptation and resilience to protect vulnerable populations, particularly those in coastal areas and agricultural regions, including through the construction of coastal protection infrastructures to shield communities from rising sea levels and storm surges;**

(e) **Prioritize sustainable water management practices to ensure that water resources are distributed efficiently, particularly in drought-prone areas such as La Paz;**

(f) **Support climate-vulnerable communities through assistance programmes to deal with forced displacement and other climate-related challenges, and provide financial support, resettlement assistance and sustainable livelihoods programmes that help communities adapt to climate impacts;**

(g) **Promote inclusive participation in developing climate solutions.**

101. **Concerning active, free and meaningful participation, the Special Rapporteur recommends that the Government:**

(a) **Ratify the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (the Escazú Agreement), ensuring that all citizens can engage meaningfully in development-related decision-making;**

(b) **Strengthen protection for environmental and human rights defenders, including by enhancing security measures, addressing impunity for attacks, and encouraging collaboration with the Office of the National Commissioner for Human Rights, civil society organizations, businesses and Indigenous councils;**

(c) **Take effective measures to facilitate participation by marginalized groups, in particular Indigenous Peoples, Afro-Hondurans, women, young people, and persons with disabilities, in decision-making processes;**

(d) **Promote digital inclusion and invest in digital literacy programmes, especially in rural areas, to expand access to digital platforms for civic engagement;**

(e) **Combat corruption by strengthening anti-corruption frameworks, ensuring accountability in public decision-making and restoring public confidence in governance institutions;**

(f) **Expand transparency laws to require private companies, particularly those in the extractive and energy sectors, to disclose environmental, social and governance data.**

102. **Regarding the role of businesses, the Special Rapporteur recommends that the Government:**

(a) **Develop and implement – in meaningful consultation with all stakeholders – a national policy on investment governance that provides incentives only to companies that generate sustained decent jobs, that respect human rights, that do not pollute the environment and that contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals;**

(b) **Modernize bilateral investment agreements and seek international technical assistance to find creative ways to address arbitration claims by foreign investors;**

(c) **Develop a national action plan on business and human rights to implement the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and require large companies to conduct human rights due diligence.**

103. **In addition, the Special Rapporteur recommends that businesses take seriously their responsibility to respect human rights, including environmental rights and the right to development, to integrate effective climate mitigation and adaptation strategies into their business models, to meaningfully consult all relevant stakeholders before pursuing any development projects, to respect Indigenous Peoples' rights and to protect environmental and human rights defenders.**

104. **Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur recommends that foreign investors act responsibly while operating in Honduras and refrain from filing patently unjust arbitration claims against the Government.**