



Reports on the 45th session of the UN Human Rights Council

Biennial panel discussion on the right to development

Theme: COVID-19 and the right to development: we are all in this together

The panel is held pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution [42/23](#) (The right to development). Main sponsors of mandating resolution: Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), except Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras and Peru. Current NAM coordinator: Azerbaijan.

The Panel Chair: **H.E. Ms. Socorro Flores Liera**, Vice-President of the Human Rights Council.

Opening statement:

Ms. Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Beyond the health emergency, COVID-19 is a profound human crisis, deeply rooted in discrimination and inequalities. Coupled with the climate emergency, the pandemic is the **gravest global threat** in generations. We must close **gaps in health and social protection systems** - building resilience to future crises. Fighting the pandemic demands **renewed multilateralism**, political will and strong leadership at all levels, it calls for bold policies, **financial and technical support** to countries and communities in need including through urgent **debt relief**. A vaccine against COVID-19 must be a global public good. We must renew global partnership and international cooperation, including South-South initiatives. Recovering from COVID-19 is a chance to **reverse** longstanding cycles of poverty and inequality.

Video messages:

H.E. Mr Abdulla Shahid, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Maldives

Today we are facing a challenge that is rare in its impact, and its reach. This is the time to rethink our development models, to ensure that meeting the needs of the **most vulnerable** is the common yardstick used to measure our success in building back better. As we plan for post-pandemic recovery it is vital to work together to meet the challenges of **debt relief, promote investment and unleash the creative potential of our economies**. Many strides have been made since the adoption of **the Declaration of the Right to Development in 1986**. We cannot let any pandemic or virus push us back another decade.

Mr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization

WHO looks forward to **Azerbaijan's co-facilitation** of the preparations for the **UNGA Special Session on COVID-19**. COVID-19 is a powerful demonstration that health is a prerequisite, and the foundation of social, economic and political stability. By adopting a **human rights-based approach** in the COVID-19 response and recovery, we can minimize sickness and death, especially among the most disadvantaged people. Through the **Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator**, WHO is working with partners around the globe to ensure equitable access to vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics for COVID-19.

Panellists:

H.E. Mr Vaqif Sadiqov, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the UN Office and other international organizations in Geneva, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement

The NAM underscores that the control of the COVID-19 pandemic relies on proper **preparedness, prevention, resilience-building**, and greater national, regional and international **collaboration**. Equitable access, fair distribution and affordability of **diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines** for COVID-19 are important priorities for developing countries and least developed countries. The negative effects of the **unilateral measures** also exacerbate the difficult situation resulting from COVID-19, creating obstacles to the full realization of their human rights, including the right to development.

Ms Isabelle Durant, Deputy Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Trade and Development

Covid-19 is a cruel reminder of our common vulnerability – as individuals, as nations and as a global community. The socio-economic figures are unanimous :



Reports on the 45th session of the UN Human Rights Council

- The global economy is expected to contract by 4 to 5% in 2020.
- The pandemic plunges 70 to 100 million people into extreme poverty, with South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa being the most affected.
- The recent report by Olivier de Shutter is very illustrative.
- There may be a reduction in global working time equivalent to 400 million full-time jobs.
- UNDP predicts that its Human Development Index (HDI) will decline for the first time since 1990.

Three aspects are essential: trade (1), science, technology and innovation (2), and international cooperation and solidarity to help developing countries to fund their responses to COVID-19 (3). More solidarity and cooperation are also needed in two crucial areas: **climate change** and the **digital economy**.

Mr Carlos Correa, Executive Director of the South Centre

The health and economic crisis created by COVID-19 has aggravated and revealed **disturbing trends that hinder** the realization of the right to development. They include: actions aimed at **weakening the WHO**, a return to isolationist policies such as the so-called '**vaccine nationalism**', the persistence of **unilateral coercive measures**, the advocating in the TRIPS Council for the **monopolization of drug and vaccine technologies**. The new challenges require energetic and articulated action from countries that believe in and practice **international cooperation and solidarity**. The Non-Aligned Movement, currently under the presidency of Azerbaijan, has been playing an important role in this regard.

Ms. Maria Mercedes Rossi, Main representative of the Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII to the UN in Geneva and Coordinator of the Working Group on the Right to Development of the Forum of Catholic-Inspired NGOs in Geneva

COVID-19 has exposed the contradictions of our societies shaped by **neoliberalism and a distorted model of globalisation**. We often hear the leitmotiv "we are all on the same boat" – we are in the same storm, but travelling on different boats. The capacity to face emergencies and to have the resilience to overcome them, has proved to be linked to **factors beyond our control** or choice. The most **vulnerable people** are bearing the brunt of the humanitarian, economic, and social consequences of this catastrophic pandemic. Our NGOs supports the **draft declaration on the right to international solidarity** presented by the former Independent Expert, Ms Virginia Dandan and strongly advocates for a **convention on the right to development**. We need **urgent action** now, including debt cancellation, ending unilateral coercive measures, countering tax havens and corruption, respecting the commitments of the Paris agreement, carrying out meaningful reforms in global governance, and reducing military expenditures among others.

Oral Interventions from States and Observers:

Interventions from States: *United Arab Emirates on behalf of GCC, Burkina Faso on behalf of Group of African States, Maldives on behalf of a group of countries, European Union, Viet Nam on behalf of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), Qatar, India, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Mauritania, Morocco, Cuba, Togo, China, Bahamas, Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Cabo Verde, Ethiopia, Russian Federation, Lao People's Democratic Republic.*

Interventions from Observers: *iuventum e.V., International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations, Sikh Human Rights Group, Rencontre Africaine pour la defense des droits de l'homme, Chinese Association for International Understanding, International Human Rights Association of American Minorities.*

The following topics were further brought up during the discussion:

Progress made in implementing the right to development. Common challenges and needs in the fight against COVID-19. Need to ensure economic investment. Social and cultural rights. Climate change ("the silence pandemic"). Need for broader partnerships with developing countries, and hence fostering the flow of development aid, market access, digital cooperation, and technical assistance. The role of the digital sector. Access to vaccines and medicines. Possibility of incorporating the concept of sustainability into a prospective binding instrument.

To watch full Panel Discussion on the right to development, refer to [UN Web TV](#).