President, Delegates,

Belgium fully supports the statement made earlier by Poland on behalf of the EU.

Belgium has been following the debates on the right to development with the utmost attention and we look forward to the report that will be drafted for the 19th session of the Human Rights Council. We support the idea that the right to development is not about charity, but about enablement and empowerment. Empowerment of human beings is in the first place a responsibility of the national state to which the individual belongs: only an enabling environment supported by democratic governance can lead to human development in the long run. Let me recall operational paragraph 15 of the GA resolution 65/219 on the right to development: ‘the General Assembly stresses that the primary responsibility for the promotion and protection of all human rights lies with the State, and reaffirms that States have the primary responsibility for their own economic and social development and that the role of National policies and development strategies cannot be overemphasized’;
Belgium also stresses that the right to development is an individual right: Everyone is entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized. However, the right to development is often used as a synonym for economic growth or international cooperation. But economic growth and financial security are merely a part of the concept which covers much more:

The right to development for individuals can only be realized if all other human rights are promoted and improved. Democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. By this we mean that all political, civil, social, economic and cultural rights are necessary in order to accomplish development. The famous Maslow Pyramid shows us that self-development can only be achieved if a person is safe, in good health, surrounded by loving ones and has self-esteem. In order to reach the level of development, one must first not only achieve but more importantly, master these previous levels.

The right to development therefore can only be achieved if at the same time all other rights are improved, such as freedom of expression and association, political freedom, absence of all forms of discrimination, quality education, decent work in good conditions, access to health care services as well as other economic rights. The right to development must
encompass the promotion of good governance, the rule of law and effective anti-corruption measures, and include the principles of participation based on nondiscrimination and gender equality, transparency, access to information and accountability. Also, we should keep into account that the right to development should be the right to ‘sustainable development’ as encroachments on the environment are often made in the name of development.

In this regard, Belgium supports the clear link between the commitment of states to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the right to development.

Belgium would like the panel’s opinion on how we can promote an enabling environment that helps us to achieve the right to development for all individuals.

We would also like to ask the panel what their opinion would be on the criteria and operational sub-criteria that were drafted by the working group.

Thank you.