United Nations

Statement by
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Chair, Second Committee of the 66th General Assembly of the United Nations

“The Right to Development at 25:
Policy Coherence in the Global Partnership for Development”

8 November 2011, UN Headquarters, New York

Mr. Chair,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Twenty-five years ago, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Right to Development. Even though there has been intermittent progress in the areas of security, economic and social development, we are still striving to make the ideals of the Declaration a reality for all. This anniversary presents an opportunity to focus on realizing the vision of the Declaration, to make its vision a reality for all.

Humanity faces interdependence as never before. Hence, some of the greatest challenges for development that we face are global. We are still in the middle of an international financial crisis. We are facing the adverse effects of climate change. We are grappling with global food shortages, price volatility, insecurity, uncertainty and of course, hunger and famine. Extreme poverty has not been eradicated. In addition, due to recent price hike of energy and food, the gains that we achieved is eroding—instead of a decline another 44 million additional added to below poverty level this year alone. In fact, number of people below poverty level has further increased. More than 1.4 billion people still live on less than $1.25 a day. This week, it is disclosed that over 49 million people live in below poverty level in USA, the richest country of the world. No wonder, inequality concerns and social unrest are becoming prominent in many corners of the world.

These challenges need to be addressed at both the national and global levels. And for effective global action, we must better coordinate our collective response and implement policy in a coherent manner. Implementation, implementation and implementation on the ground is the cry of the day. We must also work to empower people, to ensure their full enjoyment of this human right – the Right to Development – in the context of peace and security.

Prime Minister of Bangladesh Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina elaborated this correlation in her speech in the 66th UNGA. She underpinned that, at the bottom of the myriads of challenges the globe is facing today is the lack of people’s empowerment. Once the issue of empowerment is addressed and effectively realized, it is bound to usher in development and stability.
Ladies and gentlemen,

An important first step to national and global action is the realization that development is a human right; this right belongs to everyone, without exception.

Recognizing development as a fundamental right is an important and necessary step. But it is not sufficient. Rights must be fully realized, and there remain significant gaps between declaration and implementation. Countries need to create a more enabling environment for their realization, both at the domestic and global levels.

The primary responsibility for fostering equitable development rests with States. But the realities of globalization demand the engagement of all of us, including the United Nations and other development actors at the international level. Ultimately, our collective role is to ensure that a global partnership for development truly serves the aspirations of the people themselves as holders of rights and as the legitimate subjects and beneficiaries of development.

With an ever-increasing pool of development actors, the need for policy coherence, based on the holistic approach and country ownership enshrined in the Declaration on the Right to Development, has never been more evident.

The Second Committee continues to play an important role in generating an enabling environment and advancing global policy coherence. It addresses topics and issues on financial and economic matters and works to achieve meaningful consensus on matters that are vital to the fostering of development.

The meaningful implementation of the mandates contained in the Declaration on the Right to Development also requires coherence in the endeavours of the First, Second, and Third Committees of the General Assembly. The topics of disarmament and international security; economic and financial developments; and social, humanitarian and cultural issues are all intertwined. These issues need to be addressed in a holistic way because of the intrinsic links between peace, human rights and development. For example, diversion of budget allocation from producing nuclear arsenal or weapons of mass destruction to food, education and energy productivity could help humanity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let us also be mindful that the Millennium Development Goals are a visible expression of the Right to Development. They demonstrate commitments to translate the Declaration of Human rights into concrete achievements.

The eight MDGs are, of course, interrelated. Achieving them requires a partnership between developed and developing countries. This is articulated in MDG 8, which asserts the collective responsibility for international cooperation and assistance to achieve all the MDGs. Without doubt, success in any one Goal relies on the achievement of the others.

However it is very unfortunate to note that, MDG 8 is the only MDG that lacks any target, goals and indicators to follow up and monitor. This international document has become a historical testimony that, all partners and advocates of right to development
are only expert in prescribing and advising; when question of sharing and realization comes, they all shrug off the responsibilities. Looking at MDG8, i.e. MDG on global partnerships – it does not have any mechanism to evaluate its progress. Its failure has reminded the global community that, it is easy to prescribe and proscribe developing countries and the needy, but it’s difficult to share their burden.

Implementing the Right to Development can strengthen this global partnership to help achieve the MDGs. The Right to Development requires the international community to create an enabling global environment, free of structural impediments and where developing countries have opportunities for international economic activities.

The Right to Development also incorporates the principle of international cooperation, along with the principles of transparency, equality, participation, inclusiveness, accountability and non-discrimination. These principles should be followed at all levels.

Mr. Chairman,

With the Right to Development comes the responsibility of achieving development that is sustainable. Rio+20 will present a historic opportunity to determine how the international community will address global challenges in a sustainable way.

The universal values of sustainable development are the essence of what was adopted at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit in Brazil and what the United Nations is pursuing at the global level. The Rio Principles and Agenda 21, both adopted at the Earth Summit, remain valid.

Sustainable development should provide for adequate shelter, food, clothing, water, sanitation, and education, along with a healthy environment. Because of its social, economic and environmental development “pillars”, sustainable development has emerged as a link to the Right to Development.

The link between sustainable development and human rights was further reinforced in at the Millennium Summit in 2000, the 2005 World Summit and the MDG Summit in 2010. World leaders explicitly recognized the close linkages between sustainable development, right to development, human rights, and peace and security.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Second Committee is open to exploring with other Committees and other international actors ways in which we could work together to achieve our common goals and overcome our shared challenges. I invite all of you to join us in facing the challenges.

The Right to Development is about the well being of people. Let us work together, the government, the civil society, the NGOs, the Business sector, private individuals, UN agencies and all other stakeholders so that the people we represent can fully be empowered to exercise, enjoy and achieve their goals of Right to Development.

I thank you.