

UNITED NATIONS

Centre for Human Rights

Global Consultation on the Realization of the
Right to Development as a Human Right

Geneva, 8 - 12 January 1990

Joint statement by the International Commission of
Jurists, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom,
International Council of Jewish Women, World Federation of Methodist
Women, Zonta International, International Alliance of Women,
International Federation of Women Lawyers, World Association of
Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, World Union of Catholic Feminin Organizations,
the International Fellowship of Reconciliation and the World
Association for World Federation

GE.90-15053

NGO STATEMENT TO THE GLOBAL CONSULTATION ON THE REALIZATION
OF THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT AS A HUMAN RIGHT

The undersigned Non-Governmental Organizations in consultative status with ECOSOC wish to present the following suggestions:

In spite of the high hopes placed in the International Development Strategy of the Third UN Development Decade, its objectives have not been realized. The serious situation in which the world finds itself and the frustrations resulting from the failure of all countries to live up to the principles they have accepted call at present for a bold and generous initiative toward the realization of the right to development.

Steps should aim at greater social and economic justice between countries and within them, and a more equitable sharing of the world's resources. Development is more than economic growth and should include meeting the fundamental needs of all people and removing inhuman differences in standards of living which now condemn millions to poverty and early death.

Therefore we welcome the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly on 4 December 1986 of the Declaration on the Right to Development. The right to development is the capacity recognized to each individual, to each people, - and to each group of being able to accede to greater well-being and dignity in respect for freedom, justice and a meaningful cultural identity. The right to development is applicable in all parts of the world since poverty and exclusion of vulnerable sectors of the society are present in all countries. The right to development has therefore an individual and a collective dimension. It originates in the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and other relevant international instruments of human rights.

We believe that the right to development must be implemented by a comprehensive programme taking into account necessary reforms in the structure of world production, energy-use, food and agriculture, industrialization, terms of trade, flow of resources to the developing countries, the international monetary system and external indebtedness, and the transfer of technology with the prime purpose being the development of all human beings in their social and cultural diversity.

The Global Consultation will pay special attention to methods to monitor the right to development. Therefore we wish to draw attention to the following points:

1) MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

The need to review and to monitor international development strategies and the realization of the right to development is a crucial problem. We must find ways to make the Member States of the United Nations more aware of their accountability towards the international community and their responsibilities to the peoples in the developing countries.

Progress, however noteworthy, achieved in the attainment of targets expressed in quantitative terms, must never lose sight of human needs and aspirations.

Non-Governmental Organizations with their activities at the local, national, and international level should play an active role in monitoring development policies and the right to development. Non-governmental organizations have taken a lead in monitoring violations of human rights in such fields as arbitrary arrests, executions and torture. They are increasingly active in monitoring environmental situations. Thus they can be usefully associated in efforts to monitor the right to development.

The United Nations System - including the United Nations, its Specialized Agencies and its financial institutions - must also develop a self-monitoring system so that the right to development is an integral part of planning and evaluation of the United Nations' development activities. We propose the following measures:

a) All United Nations agencies and development programmes should appoint a person at a high level to deal with the implementation of the right to development.

b) As part of the internal review procedures, a panel of independent experts or an advisory board serving in a personal capacity should be appointed by the Secretary-General to review information from any relevant source including governments, United Nations organs and agencies, other multilateral organizations and non-governmental organizations. On the basis of the reports, the Secretary-General should report to the Commission on Human Rights and through it to ECOSOC on the progress of implementation of the Declaration on the Right to Development at the national, regional

and international levels, including within the United Nations itself.

c) This panel or advisory board should in cooperation with the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights help to develop indicators to monitor the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population.

d) Within the World Information Campaign on Human Rights special material should be developed to promote awareness of the right to development among non-governmental organizations in both developed and developing countries.

e) The Advisory Services Programme of the Centre for Human Rights should give priority to the promotion of the right to development through seminars, training courses, translations and publications for persons within inter-governmental organizations, governments and non-governmental organizations at local, regional and national levels.

2) DEVELOPMENT: AN EVOLVING CONCEPT

The Declaration on the Right to Development recognizes " that development is a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting therefrom" and that " all human rights and fundamental freedoms are indivisible and interdependent and that, in order to promote development, equal attention and urgent consideration should be given to the implementation, promotion and protection of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and that, accordingly, the promotion of, respect for and enjoyment of certain human rights and fundamental freedoms cannot justify the denial of other human rights and fundamental freedoms."

Therefore development requires the existence within a society of agreed-upon mechanisms for the allocation of all available resources in the interests of the whole community.

The Declaration on the Right to Development also states that "effective measures should be undertaken to ensure that women have an active role in the development process." In fact, women already play a most active role. The problem is rather that the role is rarely acknowledged, that women do not receive a fair share of the result of their activities, and that they do not participate equally in decision-making. Therefore renewed emphasis

women's work especially in the informal and unpaid sectors.

However development is more than equality of opportunity for all in their access to basic resources, education, health services, food, housing, employment and the fair distribution of income. Development also embodies the aspiration of individuals and societies to a better and richer life. The visions of the good life and agreement upon the methods acceptable to attain it will change through time. Therefore we must remain sensitive to the evolution of the concept of development, to ethical considerations on the use of science and technology, and to increased awareness of the interaction between humans and the environment.

3) FOOD

Food is not a mere commodity; it is the basis of life and should be regarded as a basic human right in all development plans.

Likewise land in many countries and cultures is equated with life. It is therefore essential that measures be taken so that land ownership is a real possibility for those who work it. States, therefore, are encouraged to implement genuine land reform programmes that transfer land at little or no cost to the farmers. In addition, the necessary support structure must be given to farmers, both women and men, to produce more for local needs.

Resources allocation should be devoted to food production for the satisfaction of essential local needs. Given the important role which women play in basic food production in many countries, special attention should be given to their contribution in all agricultural development efforts and care taken so that women receive a fair share of the benefits of new agricultural techniques and programmes.

Food should only be used for export and industrialisation once national food requirements have been met.

Food aid policies should be drastically reformulated by agricultural-exporting countries so that the focus is on reaching the most needy population groups wherever they may be. Moreover food aid should only be used after careful study of the consequences in order that it not have a detrimental effect on local production and prices in developing countries nor on local dietary patterns.

Urgent attention should be given to world food security and the dangers of declining reserve food stocks.

4) POPULAR PARTICIPATION

The realization of the right to development requires active popular participation in all aspects of life which have an influence on individual and collective well-being.

Such popular participation includes the right to "take part in the conduct of public affairs directly or through freely chosen representatives" as set out in article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

More, however, popular participation must extend to all aspects of social, political, economic and cultural affairs and thus includes the whole process of decision-making concerning development as well as the evaluation ^{and} ~~and~~ sharing of the benefits of development.

Popular participation often implies the promotion of local initiatives, a degree of political and economic decentralization, and the voluntary implementation of development projects.

Popular participation requires the free association of individuals, and special care must be given to safeguarding the right of association.

5) DEVELOPMENT vs ARMAMENTS

Money spent on arms cannot be put into social and economic development. This distortion of priorities negates the possibility for harmonious and just world development. The continued escalation of arms expenditure has undermined the Third Development Decade and threatens all development strategies.

Violence, wars, armed conflicts, militarization and the proliferation of para-military groups in developing countries have prevented development in a spirit of justice and caused large-scale destruction. Efforts must be made to permit political dialogue leading to the pacific settlement of disputes.

We believe that the improved international relations among the nuclear-weapon States should lead to extensive cuts in military spending. Funds should be re-directed toward world-wide economic and social development.