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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development

Summary of the fifth intersessional meeting for dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

Summary

The present report, prepared pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 43/19, contains a summary of the fifth intersessional meeting for dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that was held on 19 January 2023 in advance of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The previous intersessional meetings for dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda were held in January and December 2019, January 2021 and January 2022.

* The present report was submitted after the deadline owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.



I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to its resolution 43/19, on 19 January 2023 the Human Rights Council held the fifth intersessional meeting for dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.¹ The meeting built on the previous four intersessional meetings held pursuant to Council resolutions 37/24 and 43/19. Informed by the theme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development to be held in July 2023,² the theme for the fifth intersessional meeting was “Overcoming multiple crises: realizing the Sustainable Development Goals through a human rights-enhancing economy”. The meeting focused on three of the Sustainable Development Goals, which will be reviewed in depth by the high-level political forum on sustainable development: Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation), Goal 11 (sustainable cities and communities) and Goal 17 (means of implementation and partnerships for the Goals) and looked into how anchoring human rights in economic policymaking at the present time of crises is essential to resuming progress on the 2030 Agenda. The meeting consisted of a high-level opening session, a thematic session and a brief closing session.

2. The Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, Galib Israfilov, chaired the meeting. The President of the Human Rights Council, Václav Bálek, made brief opening remarks, pointing to the important contributions of the Human Rights Council in overcoming multiple crises. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights also presented opening remarks, highlighting the value of putting pre-existing human rights obligations back into economic policy discussions to build a human rights-enhancing economy that benefits everyone, invests in the Sustainable Development Goals and underpins inclusive and sustainable development, leading to the transformative change envisaged in the 2030 Agenda. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chile, Antonia Urrejola, gave the keynote address, underscoring the need for urgency to counter inequalities and providing insights into the measures and initiatives taken by Chile to strengthen the protection and fulfilment of economic, social, cultural and environmental rights, while addressing structural issues such as poverty, inequalities, lack of housing and challenges to education and health care.

3. The thematic session focused on the added value of human rights in economic policy planning, including budgeting and domestic revenue generation, particularly relating to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals 6, 11 and 17. The thematic session comprised four panellists: the Director of Research, Institute on Race, Power and Political Economy, the New School, New York, Grieve Chelwa; the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights, Attiya Waris; the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Tunisia, Arnaud Peral; and the Global Director of The Shift #Right2Housing, Leilani Farha. The thematic discussion was moderated by the Chair of the meeting.

II. Summary of proceedings

A. Opening session

4. The Chair opened the discussion and outlined the objectives, modalities and format of the meeting. He noted that multiple interconnected crises continued to undermine the global recovery and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and welcomed the opportunity to share good practices, recommendations and policy solutions that promoted and protected human rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, geared towards countering inequalities and leaving no one and no country behind. He recalled that the meeting built on the outcomes of the first, second, third and fourth intersessional meetings.³ The summary

¹ See www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/fifth-intersessional-meeting-human-rights-and-the-2030-agenda.

² See <https://hlpf.un.org/2023>.

³ See [A/HRC/40/34](#), [A/HRC/43/33](#), [A/HRC/46/48](#) and [A/HRC/49/59](#) respectively.

report of the fifth meeting would feed into discussions at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in July 2023.

5. In his opening remarks, Mr. Bálek emphasized the need to recapture the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in order to tackle the root causes of the multiple crises. He urged participants to reignite the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, since only seven years were left until the 2030 target date. He referred to initiatives by the Human Rights Council aimed at addressing interlinked crises, such as climate change, war, other conflicts and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic that were putting the 2030 Agenda in danger. He noted that the Human Rights Council had called on States to ensure that national and international sustainable development efforts included a human rights perspective. He also emphasized the role of the intersessional meeting when it came to ensuring that human rights informed the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and would overcome the impact of the current crises.

6. In his opening remarks, the High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda represented an inspiring and truly universal call to action. However, despite early significant achievements, progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals had been reversed. Multiple crises, including the global pandemic, had pushed an additional 93 million more people into extreme poverty in 2020. Global repercussions and economic uncertainties had been further exacerbated by the war in Europe.

7. The High Commissioner noted that food insecurity and a cost-of-living crisis was leaving many not knowing how they would survive from one day to the next. At the same time, inequalities were skyrocketing. A staggering 828 million people were undernourished, up from 150 million in just three years. The devastating consequences of the climate emergency continued unabated and 60 per cent of low-income countries and 30 per cent of emerging market economies were in or near debt distress, amid a looming global recession. That development further limited the ability of States to deliver on the rights to health, education, social protection and other human rights, affecting the most disadvantaged sections of society, including women and girls. Corruption and associated illicit financial flows also continued to violate people's rights to health, education, social protection and their democratic rights, thereby undermining the rule of law. The situation constituted a human rights crisis.

8. The High Commissioner called upon the Human Rights Council and the international community to galvanize the political will to implement the transformative change envisaged by the 2030 Agenda for all people and all countries. First, he stated, the international community would need to work together to truly place human rights at the core of all dimensions of sustainable development by empowering people as active agents of sustainable development; by protecting social movements and grass-roots organizations from pushback; and by prioritizing the collection of disaggregated data. Second, he called for a human rights-enhancing economy, saying that economies needed to be infused with human rights. Human rights provided useful guardrails to ensure the prioritization of investments with a focus on those most marginalized. They would also steer the design of public budgets to reduce inequalities and address patterns of discrimination and generate economies that focused on people and the safety, health and sustainability of the planet. Finally, the High Commissioner noted that there was a need for an international economic and financial architecture that was fit for purpose - one that would enable States to expand the fiscal space for human rights and sustainable development rather than limiting their ability to do so.

9. The High Commissioner concluded by noting that the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, to be held in September 2023, marked the halfway point to 2030 and was a critical moment for the delivery of a global plan on ways to accelerate implementation of the Goals. He called upon the audience to rise higher to rescue the 2030 Agenda and remarked that human rights – all human rights – were the lever to do so.

10. In her keynote statement, Ms. Urrejola noted that the promotion of and respect for human rights was fundamental for Chile. Chile hoped to contribute to the protection of democracies, the advancement of economic, social, cultural and environmental rights, and the guarantee of the rights of women and girls, with a view to the total eradication of gender-

based violence. Chile attached the highest importance to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, with the aim of putting people at the centre and with a view to decisively improving the standard of living for all.

11. Ms. Urrejola referred to the address of the President of Chile, Gabriel Boric, to the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly in September 2022, in which he noted that although Chile had made steady progress in reducing poverty since the return to democracy in 1990, economic inequality remained an issue, as evidenced in the access to and enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. That situation had, in part, challenged the country's path to development, despite the reduction in extreme poverty and the increase in per capita income. The social unrest in October 2019 had shown that inequality represented a threat to today's democracies.

12. Ms. Urrejola stated that, as a consequence, it was a priority for the Government of Chile to make progress in reducing inequality through responsible and urgent social policies. Such policies, she added, were being implemented during a phase of challenges arising not only from the COVID-19 pandemic, the considerable increase in migratory flows during the previous five years and the onslaught of drought and climate change, but also from the complex global economic scenario, which was marked by the post-pandemic recovery, rising inflation and the effects of global conflicts. Chile had, for example, introduced a pension reform aimed at reducing inequalities, while acknowledging that social security was a fundamental human right.

13. Ms. Urrejola stated that the world also faced a triple environmental crisis of climate change, loss of biodiversity and pollution. Given the magnitude of the crisis, Chile was convinced that having a clean, healthy and sustainable environment was a human right, which was also closely linked to other fundamental guarantees, such as the right to life.

14. Ms. Urrejola concluded by emphasizing that Chile was also preoccupied with the vulnerability of women and girls. The adoption of a feminist foreign policy, in the context of an avowedly feminist government, was particularly urgent. Such a policy not only required progress in the equitable representation of women in international bodies, but also in prioritizing initiatives that promoted gender equality in all governmental work, including the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5. Chile was committed to promoting policies that had human rights and sustainable development at their core, guiding all actions so that the State could guarantee respect for and protection of those rights, with a special emphasis on the most vulnerable populations. She emphasized that Chile was taking firm steps towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals to fulfil the central and transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind.

B. Thematic discussion

15. The Chair moderated the thematic session. The session focused on good practices and recommendations to anchor human rights more strongly in sustainable development interventions and policies and recover from multiple crises. The panel members were invited to share their insights regarding measures and initiatives taken towards the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals 6, 11 and 17.

16. The first panellist, Mr. Chelwa, noted that his institute, the Institute on Race, Power and Political Economy at the New School, examined the intersections of race, social stratification, power and the political economy. The Institute engaged in strategic partnerships and produced research intended to advance policy and practice in fundamentally new directions that promoted shared prosperity across race, gender, nativity, ethnicity, sexual orientation and their intersections.

17. Mr. Chelwa noted that the events of the previous couple of years had demonstrated the limitations and contradictions inherent in the current mode of production and distribution across the world. The COVID-19 pandemic and the carnage that it had wrought had laid bare the fact that the current economic and health systems had been designed to serve the few at the expense of the many.

18. Mr. Chelwa noted that billions of people across the world did not have access to publicly provided and guaranteed social safety nets to deal with the economic fallout from the pandemic and had therefore been largely left to fend for themselves as economies had ground to a halt. The world had yet to fully reckon with the implications of that mass neglect. While billions were undergoing suffering, the global elite, which was favoured by the current systems of production and distribution, had carried on with their lives. The pandemic had also laid bare the fact that the most essential workers were those whose absence from work had completely grounded all undertakings that were vital to the well-being of humanity. Those workers were, however, the most poorly remunerated employees and the most exposed to COVID-19.

19. Mr. Chelwa noted that the pandemic had revealed the immorality of the global intellectual property architecture, which prioritized shareholder returns over respecting the right to life, including the binding obligation of Governments to respect the rights of people during a historic pandemic. In Africa, many leaders had had to beg for access to vaccines or at least for the ingredients of those vaccines.

20. Mr. Chelwa further noted that the global economy had to be restructured. The world needed to reconfigure the current systems of production and distribution in such a way that economies functioned for the many rather than the few. It was necessary to build economies that would uphold the dignity of all 8 billion people on the planet without any prejudice as to race, gender, nationality, immigrant status or other social identities that had historically been used as criteria for exclusion or inclusion. The concept of a human rights-enhancing economy was particularly instructive at a time of multiple crises. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights that had been adopted 75 years ago should serve as a guide. That landmark document was the product of inputs from diverse economic and political systems and set forth a framework through which human dignity could be realized and upheld. According to the Declaration, human dignity was to be buttressed by five sets of inseparable rights: political, civil, cultural, social and economic rights.

21. Mr. Chelwa stated that in the immediate aftermath of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a campaign to emphasize some rights and to delegitimize others became prominent. That campaign had originated with the Mont Pelerin Society, which was founded in the late 1940s. The Mont Pelerin Society wanted to delegitimize economic rights by arguing that owing to the free market “there was no need for economic rights” as the market would produce optimal results for societies. The political realm was, however, dominated by violence, thereby necessitating a government guarantee for civil and political rights and those rights pertaining to the protection of private property. That dispensation, or neo-liberalization of human rights, namely focusing only on political, civil and property rights, had dominated the policy discourse for decades and had not led to the upholding of human dignity as envisaged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Indeed, the neo-liberalization of human rights had led to mass indignities.

22. In conclusion, Mr. Chelwa stated that a human rights-enhancing economy was required in order to recapture the bold ambition of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by paying particular attention to the role that economic rights could play in fostering human dignity. The economy played an inordinate role in determining material conditions for many across the world, a situation that necessitated that economic rights took on a prominent role when it came to enhancing human rights. If such norms and values had existed in the lead-up to the pandemic, there would have been adequate social safety nets. The recipes for life-saving vaccines would have been viewed as public goods that should benefit the public, rather than serve as mechanisms for the accumulation of profits by the pharmaceutical sector. Mr. Chelwa concluded that everyone would unify to confront the ongoing climate crisis. Finally, Mr. Chelwa added that economic policies were to a large degree not based on objective science but on political choice. Going forward, a different set of choices would have to be made.

23. Ms. Waris said that the COVID-19 pandemic had been preceded by debt unsustainability, a shift towards austerity measures and a prioritization of debt servicing that had led to a deepening of socioeconomic inequalities within and between countries. The pandemic and the subsequent appearance of other crises had exacerbated debt and fiscal

deficit levels in low- and middle-income countries and had negatively impacted human rights, particularly those of women and marginalized people.

24. Ms. Waris noted that low-income countries that were underrepresented in global economic discussions were already battling insurmountable levels of debt distress, the loss of revenue through illicit financial flows, including tax avoidance and evasion, and other issues that were in urgent need of solution. In the context of deteriorating socioeconomic situations, a rising debt burden, bankruptcy crises and the reduction in available resources that should have been spent on health, education, food and water and social protection, among other things, were affecting the most vulnerable, contravening international human rights obligations and the sovereign right to restructure debt.

25. Ms. Waris recommended a reform of the global financial architecture, in particular international debt and tax reform, including the curbing of illicit financial flows, which must be guided by international human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The guiding principles on foreign debt and human rights and the guiding principles on human rights impact assessments of economic reforms should be more systematically operationalized.

26. Ms. Waris referred to her report on international debt architecture reform and human rights,⁴ and noted that the common principles of responsible sovereign lending and borrowing had to be upheld. Those principles recognized the right of countries to restructure their debts. In the context of the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises, unused and underutilized special drawing rights (SDRs) had to be channelled from high-income to low- and middle-income countries.

27. Ms. Waris recommended that with the United Nations playing a leading role, a multilateral debt workout mechanism should be created to ensure a legitimate and level playing field, with the least costs for debtor countries, and built on the existing guiding principles.

28. Ms. Waris further noted that at its seventy-seventh session in December 2022, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 77/244, aimed at developing an international tax cooperation framework or instrument under the auspices of the United Nations and calling for more inclusive and effective international tax cooperation. The issue of creating a global United Nations tax body and establishing an international United Nations tax convention had been the subject matter of her report to the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly.⁵ In conclusion, Ms. Waris noted that international tax reforms, such as the proposed United Nations global tax body, should promote a rights-based economy to ensure human rights obligations were at the centre of financial and fiscal decision-making.

29. Mr. Peral elaborated on the work of the United Nations country team in Tunisia on Sustainable Development Goals 6 and 17. He noted that over a decade after the revolution, Tunisia faced a challenging socioeconomic situation and was going through a political and institutional transition. The COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine had increased the price for basic commodities and energy. That situation had exacerbated pre-existing structural challenges and socioeconomic inequalities. Tunisia was currently negotiating an International Monetary Fund programme in order to be able to access external financing and start the implementation of macroeconomic reforms. In that context, the United Nations country team in Tunisia had been working to promote and protect human rights and reduce the existing vulnerabilities in Tunisia in order to leave no one behind.

30. Mr. Peral stated that in order to have an impact, considering the increasing economic challenges, the guiding compass for the work of the United Nations country team had been to support the country's achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals by working across agencies to deliver as One United Nations; advocate for the integration of a human rights-based approach in budgetary matters and support social and economic policies; advocate for the alignment of the Government's new development plan for the period 2023–2025 with the Sustainable Development Goals; and forge strong partnerships with local

⁴ A/76/167.

⁵ A/77/169.

actors to further human rights in the implementation of economic and social reforms, specifically in cooperation with the vibrant civil society in Tunisia as a key vehicle to generate positive change.

31. Mr. Peral then turned to Sustainable Development Goal 6 and noted that Tunisia was facing a water crisis that had been declared an emergency. For more than 30 years, the country had been under acute water stress, which had been exacerbated by climate change. Groundwater was overexploited, especially in central Tunisia, and a report on its exploitation had indicated an exploitation rate of more than 100 per cent. Water availability would probably not cover future needs, given the projected increases in consumption and the degradation of resources related to the impacts of climate change.

32. In July 2022, during his visit to Tunisia, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation met with government authorities and an extensive network of civil society, community organizations and rights holders. At the end of his mission, he had published his preliminary findings and recommendations for the final report, which would be presented to the Human Rights Council at its fifty-fourth session in September 2023. The visit had revealed human rights challenges, such as phosphate companies polluting community water with chemical waste or hundreds of schools that either did not have access to clean water or were not connected to water piping altogether. Other United Nations agencies were partnering with the Government to enhance the right to water and sanitation for the population and make progress on Sustainable Development Goal 6. For example, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations had supported the Government to improve water productivity and had worked on the use of treated wastewater for agricultural purposes. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), jointly with the Resident Coordinator's Office, had undertaken an analysis of the impact climate change had had on water management. UNICEF had applied a Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All bottleneck analysis tool to assess climate and water scarcity risks and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization had looked at circular economy solutions for industrial water use.

33. Mr. Peral noted how, in the context of the upcoming socioeconomic reforms in Tunisia, the United Nations country team was offering support on issues related to social protection, contributing to leaving no one behind and preserving minimum standards of the population's economic social and cultural rights. The Government was currently working to enhance its social protection system to make it more resilient to shocks and prepare it for future subsidy reforms and the country team was contributing to that project. Mr. Peral also elaborated on relevant examples and concluded by saying that the integrated human rights-based approach offered an avenue for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals by fostering economic structures that were socially inclusive and respectful of economic, social and cultural rights and of the environment to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

34. Intervening on Sustainable Development Goal 11, Ms. Farha noted that if the Human Rights Council was committed to fostering human rights-enhancing economies, as the High Commissioner had rightly urged, two truths must be identified and addressed. First, that real estate was playing an outsized role in the growth of most economies and second, that real estate-based economies were producing wealth for a few and inequality, poverty and homelessness for many. She added that real estate acquisitions and transactions were a significant part of most economies. Global residential real estate was valued at approximately \$258 trillion.

35. Ms. Farha stated that residential real estate, or housing, had become an asset class for institutional financial actors, such as private equity and asset management firms, pension funds and insurance companies. Institutional investors used real estate to extract wealth and leverage capital. That constituted the "financialization" of housing. That development was contributing significantly to the global housing crisis and undermining efforts to meet the provisions of Sustainable Development Goal 11, as well as the right to housing under international human rights law.

36. Ms. Farha noted that in cities around the world, housing had become unaffordable for many, with the cost of housing now outstripping incomes. The financialization of housing

was also associated with forced evictions, the displacement of families from their homes and the growth of informal settlements across the world; contrary to the aims of the Sustainable Development Goals, homelessness, a *prima facie* violation of the right to housing, was on the rise. The financialization of housing was being enabled and driven by Governments through fiscal and monetary policies and taxation laws, for example through low interest rates, easy access to credit, preferential tax treatment, golden visa schemes and relatively weak and sometimes non-existent tenant protection. International financial institutions were contributing to this, including by promoting financialized housing models in developing economies. To date, financialized landlords and institutional investors in real estate and State policies supporting them had escaped human rights scrutiny. Within the United Nations human rights monitoring system, States were rarely held accountable for supporting the financialization of housing and its deleterious impacts. Despite being the biggest business in the world, institutional investors in residential real estate were not well represented among businesses embracing human rights, and their environmental, social and governance policies rarely touched on the impact of their investments on tenants and residents.

37. Ms. Farha noted that to transform economies so that they were human rights-enhancing, would require a new emphasis and a fundamental paradigm shift with respect to residential real estate. States and their economies would have to stop promoting and relying on real estate for so-called wealth creation that only benefited a few and must begin to shape their economies based on human rights principles to achieve human rights outcomes. Ms. Farha's organization had developed The Shift directives to assist States in that regard. They were the first global human rights standards and recommendations aimed at reshaping economies so that they ensured the enjoyment of the right to housing by all.

Overcoming multiple crises: realizing the Sustainable Development Goals through a human rights-enhancing economy

38. In their interventions, participants noted that the 2030 Agenda was the result of one of the broadest and most participatory consultation and negotiation processes in the history of the United Nations and represented a multilateral consensus between Governments and diverse actors, including civil society, the private sector and academia.⁶ However, the representative of Malaysia noted that the *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022* painted a worrying picture of the world lagging in its commitment to the Goals, owing to cascading and interlinked crises. The representative of Brazil and many other participants reiterated that the only way to overcome those crises was through integrated approaches to the promotion and protection of human rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Several delegations including those of Norway, Thailand and Zambia, underscored the importance of anchoring economic policies in human rights, as sustainable development and human rights were mutually reinforcing. The representative of Chile, also speaking on behalf of Azerbaijan, Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, Fiji, Luxembourg, Portugal, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Thailand and Uruguay, all members of the core group for resolution 43/19, reiterated that the promotion and protection of human rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda were interrelated and mutually reinforcing. A number of participants therefore asked that implementation efforts for the 2030 Agenda be strengthened. For example, the representative of Brazil noted that human rights must be at the centre of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and inform decisions across the board, from budgets to health services, to education and social security. The representative of the European Union called for strengthening cooperation on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation. The representative of the National Commission on Human Rights of Indonesia also encouraged the strengthening

⁶ Contributions were received from: Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Chile (on behalf of the core group for resolution 43/19), China, Cuba (oral statement only), Finland, Georgia, India, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Norway, Spain, Thailand, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zambia and the European Union. Contributions were also received from: Make Mothers Matter, the National Commission on Human Rights of Indonesia, the International Organization for the Right to Education and Freedom of Education (OIDE) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Due to time limitation, not all delegates were given the floor. All contributions received by the Secretariat are available online at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/fifth-intersessional-meeting-human-rights-and-the-2030-agenda>.

of the global health system to be more inclusive, equitable and responsive to crises, as had been proposed by the Government of Indonesia at the Group of 20 (G20) Summit in 2022.

39. Participants noted that economic policies had a crucial impact on human rights. Human rights should be part of economic policy planning, including inclusive budgeting and progressive domestic revenue generation. A shift towards a human rights-enhancing economy was essential to developing stronger economies. A human rights-enhancing economy, was also the road towards more inclusive and participatory societies. Providing an example for the integration of human rights principles in budgeting processes, the representative of Zambia noted that Zambia had enacted legislation that provided for a coordinated and integrated budgeting process that was participatory, responsive and results-oriented.

40. Several participants underscored the urgent need to transform the global economy in order to accelerate the economic recovery of States. Instead of prioritizing solely economic growth, the economic model should take into account that basic human rights had to be respected and promoted in all areas of economic policy planning.

41. Participants agreed that accelerating the recovery from COVID-19, overcoming crises and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda at all levels could only be achieved through renewed efforts towards a human rights-based approach. The representative of Spain noted that the 2030 Agenda, together with the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, constituted a framework that recognized that respect for human rights was an indispensable condition for human and sustainable development. With only seven years left until 2030, realizing human rights and advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda would require more effective multilateralism and bold measures that could transform political commitments into powerful actions.

42. Participants stated that the work of the Human Rights Council in promoting and protecting human rights was essential to the process of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. The 2030 Agenda was rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law. Human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals provided substantial guidance and a road map both for immediate crisis response and for long-term recovery strategies, as well as a basis for solidarity in order to leave no one behind, as outlined in the Call to Action for Human Rights and Our Common Agenda.

43. Participants called for the further strengthening of the multilateral system, particularly of the funds and programmes of United Nations agencies that were directly involved in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and capable of providing technical support and capacity-building.

44. Some participants, including the representatives of Georgia, Malta, Ukraine and the European Union, noted that the attack on Ukraine by the Russian Federation not only threatened the 2030 Agenda in Ukraine, but had exacerbated socioeconomic challenges at the global level.

45. Participants stated that issues such as the increasing cost of living, poor housing conditions, tightening financial conditions and unsustainable debt burdens posed significant challenges and were obstacles to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The global economic recovery was also threatened by the expanding gap between North and South, as well as inequality within countries, resulting in higher overall levels of inequality and the exclusion of vulnerable groups.

46. Delegations pointed to the importance of tackling the climate crisis. The representative of Maldives urged that ocean resources be sustainably used and managed and called for greater environmental protection, as outlined in multiple Sustainable Development Goals, as the impacts of climate change were becoming more frequent and intense. Maldives remained on the front line, facing higher tidal waves, stronger winds, greater coral bleaching, increased sea swells and frequent flooding. Unless the international community managed to reverse the current global trajectory of climate change, the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals would be seriously compromised by disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable. The representative of Malta noted that his Government provided financial

and technical assistance to developing countries and in particular small island developing States. The representative of Uruguay stated that since 1 January 2022, the country had introduced a carbon emission tax. A percentage of the corresponding revenues was being used to finance policies that promoted a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, sustainable transportation and systems to tackle climate change. Participants noted that the Sustainable Development Goals were fundamentally about raising well-being for all, with a particular focus on those at risk of being left behind. Safeguarding human well-being for the future required transitioning to decarbonized societies, but that could only be achieved through a just transition.

47. A number of participants stressed the importance of inclusive development, as social justice and low levels of inequality accelerated progress towards achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals. The delegate of Norway noted that inclusive societies deepened trust, and trust was essential for building and preserving sustainable societies and for conflict prevention.

48. Other participants noted the urgent need to fulfil the shared commitment towards leaving no one behind that had to be at the centre of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and should also inform decisions across all national plans on budgeting for health, education and social security. Participants also noted that the economic architecture should be guided by the principle of leaving no one behind and be informed by all human rights.

49. Renewing efforts towards access to clean, safe water and sanitation was considered essential to the recovery from the pandemic, as well as building resilience and security. The number of people without access to safe water was expected to reach 2 billion by 2025. The representative of the European Union stated that its support for safe, climate-resilient, available, acceptable, accessible and affordable drinking water, sanitation and hygiene was extensive and global, both in financial and structural terms. Over the previous decade, through development cooperation the European Union had invested more than 2.5 billion euros in water and sanitation projects in 62 countries. It had also developed internal guidelines on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, creating a tool that effectively leveraged the human rights normative framework for project implementation in this critical area. The representative of Finland added that COVID-19 had highlighted the critical importance of access to sanitation, hygiene and adequate clean water for health. The main Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All projects currently financed by Finland were in Ethiopia and Nepal. In the previous two years, approximately 1.5 million people had gained access to safe drinking water through those projects, which had included a focus on communication to reach all, an essential aspect for leaving no one behind. Delegates noted that the United Nations Water Conference in March 2023 would be an opportunity to firmly link human rights with the efforts to accelerate progress towards ensuring safe drinking water and sanitation for all.

50. Several participants emphasized that development cooperation needed to be strengthened. For example, the representative of China stated that the international community should strengthen solidarity and cooperation, and work to eliminate the inequality gap so that the fruits of development could benefit everyone in every country in a greater and more equitable manner. To build back better, there was a need to strengthen the international development architecture, especially through the delivery of technical assistance and capacity-building to countries in need. One delegation noted that the gap between developing countries and emerging economies was widening, resulting in more people with fewer opportunities. The representative of India called for increased technology transfer to support sustainable development. Other delegates agreed that achieving the Sustainable Development Goals required scaled-up international cooperation, a focus on finding lasting solutions to leaving no one behind, as well as financing, capacity-building and sharing technologies to support transformative transitions in developing countries. The representative of Cuba remarked that industrialized countries continued to fail to meet their commitments, including the commitment to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product to official development assistance (ODA). The representative of Spain said that international cooperation was essential to promoting people-centred sustainable development. Spain had therefore adopted a new law on cooperation for sustainable development and

global solidarity that provided for a significant increase in ODA and modernized the political framework by incorporating the fight against climate change, pandemics and gender gaps.

51. Participants stressed that partnerships to support a rights-based approach to development were fundamental and reported that countries were investing in new and innovative forms of partnerships. For example, the representative of Uruguay noted that Uruguay was not just working with international organizations but with different national governments, local governments, the private sector, civil society, national human rights institutions and academia. The representative of Cabo Verde noted that public-private partnerships had a crucial role to play in the creation of an economy that promoted human rights. Other delegations noted that operationalized partnerships were essential to enhancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by providing increased access to information, technical assistance and financing. The representative of Thailand stated that the country stood ready to work in partnership with interested partners through South-South and triangular cooperation frameworks.

52. Participants urged that the cooperation between the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the Human Rights Council be enhanced. The representative of UNDP noted that with the mid-term review of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals taking place in 2023, it would be helpful to make increasing use of mechanisms, such as the universal periodic review and the human rights treaty bodies to inform Sustainable Development Goal and voluntary national review processes and vice versa. UNDP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) had developed guidance for Member States on how to integrate human rights into voluntary national reviews.⁷ UNDP supported the motion to embed human rights recommendations in national development policies and to strengthen the coherence between human rights and Sustainable Development Goal systems to advance these complementary agendas.

III. Conclusions and key messages

53. **Multiple and interlinked crises are putting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in grave danger. Climate change, the war in Ukraine, higher food and energy prices, COVID-19, rising inflation and the debt crisis are having devastating effects on the most vulnerable people and countries. The world is facing the reversal of years of progress in eradicating poverty and hunger, improving health and education and providing basic services.**

54. **Human rights, all human rights, are a crucial lever for responding to and rescuing the 2030 Agenda. Today's crises highlight the urgency of taking integrated approaches, in terms of realizing both human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals, as the world is reaching the halfway point for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Secretary-General's vision set out in Our Common Agenda, his call for a renewed social contract anchored in human rights and his Call to Action for Human Rights compels the international community to think and act differently and to step up its ambition to put the Sustainable Development Goals back on track.**

55. **Unless the world can reverse the current global trajectory of climate change, the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals will be compromised, while the most marginalized and disadvantaged sections of society, including women and girls, will be disproportionately affected. Tackling the climate crisis and fulfilling the right to a healthy, clean and sustainable environment must be a top priority.**

56. **Adopting economic policies grounded in human rights is paramount for developing stronger economies, countering inequalities and resuming progress on the 2030 Agenda. It is time to put pre-existing human rights obligations into economic policymaking and align budgets and public revenue generation strategies with the human rights obligations of States. A human rights-enhancing economy is the path**

⁷ OHCHR and UNDP, "Human rights and voluntary national reviews: operational common approach guidance note" (June 2022).

towards investing in health care, social protection, quality education, clean water, housing and other fundamental rights, and correcting patterns of discrimination, as well as putting the world back on track to meet the Sustainable Development Goals.

57. Projections of fiscal austerity measures affecting 85 per cent of the world population are of grave concern. Different policy choices should be pursued. Resuming progress on the Sustainable Development Goals requires:

- (a) Reinforcement of the progressive nature of taxation systems and strengthening the institutional capacity to collect taxes;
- (b) Combating tax avoidance and evasion and illicit financial flows;
- (c) Tackling corruption;
- (d) Repositioning public expenditure;
- (e) Enhanced international cooperation and increased ODA;
- (f) Fiscal transparency, a strong civic space, freedom of expression and scrutiny of public spending;
- (g) Better anchoring of development financing in the human rights obligations of States to maximize available resources for economic, social and cultural rights.

58. Leaving no one behind is a central promise of the 2030 Agenda. That commitment of all Member States to eradicate poverty, end discrimination and reduce inequalities is at the heart of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. More than ever, policymaking should be intent on focusing on the most marginalized and disadvantaged.

59. More needs to be done to empower people as active agents of sustainable development, reinforce public participation and protect individuals, social movements and grass-roots organizations from pushback and oppression. Inclusive societies deepen trust – and trust is essential for sustaining peace and preventing instability and conflict.

60. The reform of the global financial and economic architecture must create a system that enables States to expand the fiscal space for human rights and sustainable development rather than limiting their ability to do so. International debt and tax reform, including the curbing of illicit financial flows, must be guided by international human rights and the 2030 Agenda.

61. The guiding principles on foreign debt and human rights and the guiding principles on human rights impact assessments of economic reforms should be more systematically operationalized.

62. To build back better, the international community should strengthen international development cooperation and the delivery of technical assistance and capacity-building. It should further strengthen the multilateral system, particularly the funds and programmes of the United Nations that are involved in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

63. The United Nations Water Conference in March 2023 will be an opportunity to strengthen cooperation on the human rights to safe drinking water and anchor human rights firmly in the efforts of the international community that are needed to accelerate progress towards ensuring safe drinking water and sanitation for all.

64. In cities around the world, real estate and housing have become unaffordable for many, with the cost of housing outstripping incomes. The financialization of housing is undermining the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 11, while producing negative human rights outcomes, including forced evictions, the displacement of families from their homes and the growth of informal settlements across the world. Homelessness, a *prima facie* violation of the right to housing, is on the rise. To transform economies so that they are human rights-enhancing, will require a new emphasis and a fundamental paradigm shift with respect to residential real estate. States and their

economies will have to stop promoting and relying on real estate for wealth creation that only benefits a few.

65. The post-crises recovery and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda must be guided by accurate and disaggregated data, with a renewed commitment to adopting a human rights-based approach to data collection. There must be greater investment in data for the design of evidence-based policies that prioritize marginalized and disadvantaged populations.

66. The cooperation between the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the Human Rights Council must be enhanced. The high-level political forum and regional, national and local mechanisms monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals should make use of recommendations emanating from the United Nations human rights system. States should reinforce the integration of the analysis and recommendations of the United Nations human rights mechanisms into their voluntary national reviews and national development strategies and plans. The United Nations human rights mechanisms should continue to provide guidance and recommendations as to how to identify those left behind and design policies to achieve inclusive and sustainable development.
