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

Written statement* submitted by Forum for Development and Human Rights Dialogue, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[13 August 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Economic and Social Rights and Inequality

The Forum for Development and Human Rights Dialogue would like to emphasize that economic and social rights are an essential part of human rights. However, they face one of the most complex challenges, which is discrimination or inequality, a growing phenomenon in many countries of the world, which may undermine progress and economic growth, which in turn exacerbates social divisions caused by inequalities, and thus puts serious obstacles to the prospects for sustainable development.

The relationship between economic and social rights and inequality/discrimination is evident in the fact that inequalities can affect access to basic services, such as health care, education, water, and hygiene, and can erode the human rights of individuals, due to discrimination, ill-treatment and lack of access to justice. Inequality also undermines the ability of individuals and communities to adapt to and mitigate climate change.

Moreover, while the ICCPR requires states to "respect" and guarantee civil and political rights, state parties to the ICESCR are only required to "achieve progressively" the enjoyment of economic, social, and cultural rights, and the ICCPR does not explicitly mention poverty, the main scourge preventing people from accessing their economic and social rights.

Discrimination is practiced on a variety of grounds, sometimes related to race, gender, disability, age, and political affiliation, and often affects indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, religious groups, women, and migrants/refugees.

Violations may occur either when a State fails to take action to overcome the denial of rights, or when it takes action that impedes the effective realization of rights, and violations can affect the obligations to respect, protect, and fulfill rights. When the denial of economic and social rights is the result of incapacity, (e.g. there are real resource constraints), these violations occur as a result of unpreparedness, neglect, and discrimination.

Perhaps the most prominent forms of these violations are:

- When the State is unable to fulfill one of the basic duties or to prioritize the implementation of the minimum basic levels of each right, especially for the marginalized and vulnerable
- When the state uses policies that intend to discriminate against a certain group
- When the state places restrictions not recognized in international law on the exercise of rights
- States usually use some arguments to justify such violations, citing insufficient resources, security concerns, debt burdens, or other flimsy arguments.

Therefore, the Forum for Development and Human Rights Dialogue recommends:

1. Preparing a gender-sensitive budget, as it is a valuable tool of public finance to regulate spending and taxation in a way that achieves further progress in equality.
2. Enact social spending policies in addressing inequality, as the ability to increase social spending is also a requirement to achieve the SDGs
3. Reforms in the structure of the economy can provide additional support to efforts to reduce inequality by reducing adjustment costs, reducing regional disparities, and qualifying workers for the growing number of green jobs.
4. More needs to be done to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, and to increase investment in health, education, social protection, and decent work, especially for youth, migrants, refugees, and other vulnerable communities.
5. It is important to enable and promote inclusive socio-economic growth within countries, in order to ensure equal opportunities and reduce income inequality while eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices.
6. Raise awareness and broaden policy advocacy, and select and reprioritize public expenditure targets to reduce inequalities in empowerment and opportunity;

7. Reorient fiscal and financial frameworks to reduce income and wealth disparities, and manage rapid technological change
 8. Governments should formally commit to policies aimed at eliminating inequality, and economic and social rights should become an integral part of human rights agendas, and take them as seriously as civil and political rights.
 9. Encourage countries to adopt programs that achieve equality and correct their gaps, including the renewal of normative understandings of equality.
 10. Effective promotion of equality requires recognition that there is a diversity of roles, according to age, social status, gender, geographical location, educational level, and other factors
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