

Statement to the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Development

Geneva, 26 April 2010

Thank you, Mr Chairman,

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I represent 3D → Trade – Human Rights – Equitable Economy, a Geneva-based non-profit association. Our mandate is to promote collaboration amongst trade, development and human rights professionals. The goal of our work is to ensure that trade and related rules are developed and applied in ways that promote an equitable economy.

The purpose of my speech today is to appeal to all members of the Working Group on the Right to Development to commend the results of the work of the High Level Task Force (HLTF) on the implementation of the right to development. In particular, we recommend that the Working Group endorses the list of attributes, criteria, sub-criteria and indicators presented in Addendum 2 of the report of the HLTF.¹

Indeed, we think that this list will be very useful to policy makers and development practitioners. The criteria and indicators will not only help them to measure and adapt their development policies and goals, but also to fulfil international and national human rights commitments. More generally, we are convinced that the list provides a strong basis for taking seriously the potential for monitoring and adapting development policies to align with political commitments to realize the right to development. Let me elaborate on this.

According to a forthcoming background paper commissioned by the UN Human Development Report Office², the noticed improvements in the Human Development Index over the last four decades have come from improvements in education and health. However, these improvements have little, if anything, to do with globalisation and free markets. They have to do with the decision by states to expand their educational and health systems and with initiatives of the international community to enable, for example, access to vaccines and antibiotics. Another striking finding by the study suggests that the oft-repeated dictum that growth is a necessary condition for increasing human development is simply not true.

It is in this context that the list of attributes, criteria, sub-criteria and indicators takes its significance. The HLTF is to be highly commended for its work. First, as mentioned by the HLTF, the criteria and sub-criteria are based on an extensive reading of human rights instruments. Second, the HLTF has used a holistic approach to refine them (based on three components comprehensive human-centred development, enabling environment, social justice and equity). Thus, they make up, at least in part, a human rights-based approach to development.

¹ Document A/HRC/15/WG.2/TF/2/Add.2 (Right to development – Report of the high-level task force on the implementation of the right to development on its sixth session, Addendum – Right to development criteria and operational sub-criteria)

² See <http://hdr.undp.org/en/mediacentre/lets-talk-hd>

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It took 65 years from the initial Declaration on the rights of the child (adopted in Geneva in 1924) to be translated into the Convention on the rights of the child. Looking at it from this perspective, the quarter of a century that has passed since the United Nations Declaration adopted the Right to Development in 1986 and the ten plus years that the Working Group has been spending on trying to give operational meaning to the Declaration seem like mere blinks of the eye. But let's not forget that for example, during the five days we spend discussing in this room to find appropriate wordings, compromises and conclusions, approximately 100'000 children still die from poverty, hunger, easily preventable diseases and illnesses and other related causes. As we have learned, state intervention and international initiatives do matter. Even though the list under discussion might not contain the full truth and wisdom and may contain gaps and flaws, it is a significant breakthrough as it stresses the centrality of human rights in the development process, reaffirms the necessity to use a holistic approach and tries to provide policy makers with a concrete tool.

Using the words of Robert B. Zoellick, President of the World Bank Group, "Development is no longer just North-South. It is South-South, even South-North. [...] It is time for 'new geopolitics for a multipolar economy', where all are fairly represented in Associations for the Many, not Clubs for the Few" and where "institutions [...] demonstrate real results and can be held accountable when they falter."³ Adopting the list of attributes, criteria, sub-criteria and indicators elaborated by the HLTF this week or, after some further work in the near future – for example on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to development – would not only mean a concrete and significant step towards making the right to development a reality, but would also contribute to establishing these "new geopolitics for a multipolar economy".

Mr Chairman, I thank you for your time.

³ Robert B. Zoellick, *The End of the Third World? Modernizing Multilateralism for a Multipolar World*, Speech at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars, 14 April 2010