



**STATEMENT BY MR. SAAD ALFARARGI,  
SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT**

High-Level Political Forum

**Thematic review**

*Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality:*

*Perspectives of Least Developed Countries*

*and Landlocked Developing Countries*

Wednesday, 10 July 2019, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM, Conference Room 4

NEW YORK



*Madam Chairperson, distinguished delegates, representatives of the United Nations, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am honoured to be with you today in my capacity as United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to development as part of the “Thematic review: Perspectives of Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries”.

As you know, the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to development is still a fairly new one: the UN Human Rights Council established the mandate in 2016 and I took up this role on 1 May 2017. As a Special Rapporteur, I am part of the Human Rights Councils’ Special Procedures Mechanism and required to monitor, advise and publicly report on the right to development worldwide.

When establishing my mandate, the Human Rights Council emphasized the urgent need to make the right to development a reality for everyone. I was specifically mandated to contribute to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right to development in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, and the Paris Agreement on climate change. The Agenda itself states that it is informed by the 1986 UN Declaration on the Right to Development (para 10).

The Declaration on the Right to Development provides a holistic paradigm for sustained peace, human rights and sustainable development. Aimed at the constant improvement of human well-being, it makes development a human right of all individuals and peoples without discrimination. The Right to Development entitles everyone, everywhere to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights

and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized, and fair distribution of the benefits of development including income, and equal opportunity in access to basic resources and services. The human person is the central subject of development, should be the active participant and beneficiary of the Right to Development, and is entitled to free, active and meaningful participation in development, a comprehensive process that advances all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The 2030 Agenda acknowledges that global progress has been uneven, particularly in Africa, Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. All of the countries in the Least Developed Countries category are in the global south; 33 of the LDCs today are in Africa. Eleven countries are both in the categories of LDC and Landlocked Developing Countries. The challenges they are facing are enormous. The Least Developed Countries (LDC) defined as “Low-income countries confronting severe structural impediments to sustainable development”, have the smallest incomes per capita but also lack human resources, basic infrastructure and have unstable economies. Often they have suffered from prolonged conflicts. Landlocked developing countries suffer from remoteness and isolation from world markets, which leads to high transit costs and continues to impose serious constraints on their overall socio-economic development.

Realizing the international development policy agenda – including the above mentioned key policy instruments adopted in 2015 - requires inclusive, equitable and sustainable development to ‘leave no one behind’, and ‘reach the furthest behind first’. These commitments are of even greater importance for the millions of men, women and children living in Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries.

How do we implement these commitments? The 2030 Agenda- includes multiple references to the LDCs and LLDCs, promises special attention to them (para 22) sets specific targets – notably under SDGs 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14 and 17 and many of these focus on providing means of implementation. But the progress, four years into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, is patchy and largely insufficient.

In September 2017, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 36/9, which requested that me to hold regional consultations on the implementation of the right to development. In light of this mandate, I convened a series of regional consultations in 2018 and 2019 that sought to identify good practices in designing, implementing, monitoring and assessing policies and programmes that contribute to the realization of the right to development. I will present my report on the outcomes of these consultations to the Human Rights Council in September, but I will share with you some of the recommendations, which are of particular importance for the subject that we are discussing today.

Throughout the consultations, experts and practitioners repeatedly highlighted the importance of **participation** as a basis for assessing the interests of rights holders and ensuring those interests are carried out. “Participation” for the sake of realizing the right to development involves more than mere consultation of individuals and communities; it implies meaningfully centring the rights-holders in decision-making about their own economic, social, cultural and political development.

Thus, the approach to development as only an economic outcome is incomplete since it is possible that the development priorities of a population remain unfulfilled despite bringing about economic growth. This is a particularly important consideration given the fact that growth without attendant

redistributive policies has been linked to inequality (see A/HRC/39/51, para. 12). In addition, outcomes of the regional consultations demonstrate that development should not be conceived as merely a sequential process whereby economic growth is sought to finance social policies. Rather, the right to development conceptualizes development as a holistic process requiring the input and involvement of diverse stakeholders, including States, international organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector, to achieve sustainable results. This is of particular importance for Least Developed Countries, where institutions may be weak and consultative processes underdeveloped. Development programmes and policies can only succeed if they are addressing the right priorities. **And to do that, participatory consultative processes, open for all segments of the society, have to be envisaged, budgeted for an implemented at every step of the way**

Understanding that individuals and communities must drive the processes for their own development has implications for how development is financed. When examined through the lens of the right to development, “financing for development” conveys a concept beyond charity, or the giving of resources based on the motivations and visions of a donor. Truly implementing the right to development of individuals and communities rather means financing realizes the development priorities expressed by those groups. Some international instruments and policy frameworks already incorporate this approach, notably the Sustainable Development Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and these guidelines seek to reinforce them.

Likewise, monitoring and evaluation of national and international policies has specific aims when done to assess whether the right to development is fulfilled. Under a right to development approach, outcomes and methodologies are assessed not only based on universal measurements but also on context-

specific ones, that is, on whether the policies are effectively improving the well-being of the human subject. Further, in cases where well-being is harmed, avenues of accountability should rectify those harms. To facilitate this, obstacles to accountability must be removed.

Before I conclude my statement I wanted to devote some attention to another issue, specifically affecting least Developed Countries. Last November, I chose to conduct my first country visit in my capacity as a Special Rapporteur on right to development to Cabo Verde because I believed that it is a country that has achieved an impressive progress, despite the numerous challenges that it has been facing. Cabo Verde is a small island developing state and a graduate from the least developing country (LDC) category since 2007. Being a “graduate” is an achievement in itself, but during my visit I learned that the “graduation”, and the global economic crisis of 2008, have resulted in drastic decrease of the funding for the country, thus stagnating development and many much needed reforms.

The recent report of the Committee for Development Policy from its twenty-first session (E/2019/33) also noted that many least developed countries were concerned about the prospect of graduation and losing international support measures (para 62) and that graduated countries continue to face the risk of external shocks and challenges, which should be taken into account systematically to ensure a smooth transition. The Committee presented a number of important recommendations such as the strengthening of smooth transition provisions, an improved graduation process, enhanced and more coordinated support by United Nations entities, additional efforts by graduating countries and their trading and development partners and dedicated capacity-building. The Committee recommended in particular (para 69) that graduating countries establish a senior government official as country-level graduation focal point, as

well as (para 70) a consultative mechanism with the country's development partners. I support this recommendation, which is in fully in line with articles 3.3 and 4.1 of the Declaration of the Right to Development and with the recommendations stemming from the consultations on the implementation of the right to development.

I thank you for your kind attention.