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for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights



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Human Rights Council: inter-sessional meeting on Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

**Joint Statement by the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the
Center for Economic and Social Rights, ATD Fourth World and Franciscans International**

16 January 2019, Geneva

Session 2: Reflections and Conversation on human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals

Addressing inequality and ensuring no one is left behind in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, requires States to effectively protect all human rights, including economic and social rights. To ensure that all segments of society have equitable access to water, housing, health care and food, economic and social rights must be protected in law and institutions empowered and resourced with implementation, monitoring and accountability functions. Initiatives should ensure availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of such services.

Human rights-aligned development also requires States to devote the maximum available resources to the progressive realization of economic and social rights (Art 2.1 ICESCR). This means paying attention not only to the 'size of the pie', but also how the pie is distributed. Indeed, redistribution of development gains and resource allocation choices that prioritize the most disadvantaged and discriminated against, are essential for the realization of human rights and tackling inequalities, including gender inequality.

We are told that current State financing for the SDGs is insufficient. Generating the necessary resources to fulfill human rights obligations and SDGs commitments requires measures such as progressive taxation policies and international co-operation. Some good practices in this regard are financial transaction taxes, requiring transparent public registers of beneficial ownership of corporations, ending tax 'holidays' for multinational corporations and introducing robust taxes on wealth.

The tendency is to turn to the private sector to fill the financing gap – yet provision of these social services cannot be left to the vagaries of the market or to charity. Private finance will generally flow to the most profitable domain, cherry-picking service provision to the relatively



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more affluent, charging fees where possible and neglecting the more resource-intensive, equality-focused aspects of the system – such as the provision of housing to persons with disabilities or education to children living on the streets.

There must be a recognition of the importance of a solid, well-financed, transparent and accountable public system for the provision of goods and services that are of general interest and are essential to ensuring protection of the underlying human rights, such as the rights to health or to education, and to avoiding inequalities and social segregation. Where States rely on private actors to fulfil elements of their social services systems, they must have in place a framework to regulate, monitor and hold accountable those private actors to ensure compliance with human rights.

Finally, as recognized by the Council, one of the most significant threats to both human rights and development now and in the future, is **climate change**. The lack of adequate and timely action by States individually and collectively to mitigate, prevent and adapt to the already severe impacts of climate change is already undermining human rights and decades of development gains. Therefore, coherence is critical. The Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Human Rights frameworks can be mutually reinforcing when action is taken in a coherent manner with human rights – understood holistically and not selectively – as the foundation. States must prioritise rights-respecting climate action and must rapidly transition to rights-respecting, decarbonised sustainable development pathways.

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