

Ref: IOR 40/2015.012

Index: ACT 30/011/2015

**All Permanent Representatives to  
the United Nations in New York**

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



13 February 2015

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**Subject: Human rights as one of the foundations in the post-2015 Declaration**

Dear Ambassador,

Over the recent months, we have been encouraged by the importance accorded to human rights by United Nations Member States in the Open Working Group outcome document and by the United Nations Secretary General in his synthesis report presented to the General Assembly.

If the post-2015 development agenda is to be truly transformative and leave no one behind, human rights must be recognised as its very foundation. As the post-2015 Declaration will set the tone and level of ambition, it will act as an enabler in moving human rights from being aspirational to operational. We appreciate that the co-facilitators, Ambassador Kamau and Ambassador Donoghue, mention human rights and gender equality in their elements-paper issued on 5 February 2015. However, these crucial aspects must be explicitly included as part of the vision of the agenda itself. Human rights and gender equality must not only be considered as effective vehicles to reach better sustainable development outcomes, but their progressive realization for everyone must also be recognised as crucial outcomes in themselves that we are aspiring to reach.

As discussions on the Declaration component of the post-2015 development agenda commence, we encourage you to call for the inclusion of the following essential elements at the heart of the text. We hereby also provide some language suggestions, which would capture these aspirational messages in a clear and concise manner making them accessible to citizens around the world.

### **1. Human Rights as an essential foundation for sustainable development**

*We recommit ourselves to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and rededicate ourselves to strive for a world in which every person lives free from fear and free from want, in dignity, equality and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.*

### **2. Universality and indivisibility of human rights**

*We will ensure the full respect, protection and promotion in all our countries and territories of all human rights, including the right to development, for all. This includes the right to live in freedom, peace and security, and the right to an adequate standard of living, including the rights to food, housing, water and sanitation, the rights to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and education, the rule of law and the overall commitment to just and inclusive societies for sustainable development.*

### 3. Importance of equality, in particular gender equality

*We commit to leaving no person behind, and to achieving equality in law and practice to ensure that all persons can live in dignity. We recognise that the participation and empowerment of women, is an effective way to overcome poverty and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable, and therefore commit to strive for gender equality and full respect of women and girls' equal rights.*

*We also commit to pay particular attention to the development needs and rights of the most marginalised individuals and groups in our societies as a matter of highest priority.*

### 4. Importance of accountability and good governance

*We will promote participation and democracy, and strengthen the rule of law at all levels. We will respect and implement all internationally recognised human rights and fundamental freedoms. As Governments, we will hold ourselves and others to account to deliver on the aspirations of our people, and recognise that success in full achievement of the sustainable development goals depends on good governance at the national, regional and international levels and on transparency in the financial, monetary and trading systems.*

These formulations are suggestions on how to give expression to the vision of a bold and ambitious post-2015 Declaration. In addition, and drawing inspiration from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Millennium Declaration and the Rio outcome document 'The Future We Want', we have highlighted below agreed language formulations which could also be drawn on.

As a member of the Beyond2015-campaign, we also support the points raised in the paper entitled "Inspiring and Aiming higher - Recommendations to the Post-2015 Political Declaration," available [here](#).

We encourage you to emphasise the importance of human rights, including women's rights and gender equality, in the negotiations, both through your statements in national capacity, as well as through the development of positions in the regional groups you are part of.

With this historic opportunity to shape the future of our people and our planet, we count on your support in ensuring that human rights are among the foundations of the post-2015 agenda. I thank you for your attention, and look forward to discussing these issues further at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Renzo Pomi  
Amnesty International Representative at the United Nations

## 1. Human Rights as an essential foundation for sustainable development

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### *Declaration on the Right to Development, adopted as General Assembly resolution 41/128*

**Preamble.** Concerned at the existence of serious obstacles to development, as well as to the complete fulfilment of human beings and of peoples, constituted, inter alia, by the denial of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and considering that all human rights and fundamental freedoms are indivisible and interdependent and that, in order to promote development, equal attention and urgent consideration should be given to the implementation, promotion and protection of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and that, accordingly, the promotion of, respect for and enjoyment of certain human rights and fundamental freedoms cannot justify the denial of other human rights and fundamental freedoms.

**Article 1(1).** The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled 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.

### *General Assembly resolution 66/288 “The future we want”*

**Paragraph 7.** We reaffirm that we continue to be guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and with full respect for international law and its principles.

**Paragraph 8.** We also reaffirm the importance of freedom, peace and security, respect for all human rights, including the right to development and the right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to food, the rule of law, gender equality, women's empowerment and the overall commitment to just and democratic societies for development.

### *General Assembly resolution 55/2 “United Nations Millennium Declaration”*

#### **Chapter I. Values and principles**

2. We recognize that, in addition to our separate responsibilities to our individual societies, we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level. As leaders we have a duty therefore to all the world's people, especially the most vulnerable and, in particular, the children of the world, to whom the future belongs.
4. We are determined to establish a just and lasting peace all over the world in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter. We rededicate ourselves to (...) respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for the equal rights of all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion and international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character.

#### **Chapter V. Human rights, democracy and good governance**

24. We will spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development.
25. We resolve therefore:
  - To respect fully and uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
  - To strive for the full protection and promotion in all our countries of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights for all.
  - To strengthen the capacity of all our countries to implement the principles and practices of democracy and respect for human rights, including minority rights.
  - To combat all forms of violence against women and to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

- To take measures to ensure respect for and protection of the human rights of migrants, migrant workers and their families, to eliminate the increasing acts of racism and xenophobia in many societies and to promote greater harmony and tolerance in all societies.
- To work collectively for more inclusive political processes, allowing genuine participation by all citizens in all our countries.
- To ensure the freedom of the media to perform their essential role and the right of the public to have access to information.

## 2. Universality and indivisibility of human rights

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### *General Assembly resolution 66/288 “The future we want”*

**Paragraph 9.** We reaffirm the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as other international instruments relating to human rights and international law. We emphasize the responsibilities of all States, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations, to respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status.

### *General Assembly resolution 55/2 “United Nations Millennium Declaration”*

#### Chapter V. Human rights, democracy and good governance

25. We resolve therefore:

(...)

- To respect fully and uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- To strive for the full protection and promotion in all our countries of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights for all.

## 3. Importance of equality, in particular gender equality

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### *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

**Article 7.** All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

### *General Assembly resolution 66/288 “The future we want”*

**Paragraph 11.** We reaffirm our commitment to strengthen international cooperation to address the persistent challenges related to sustainable development for all, in particular in developing countries. In this regard, we reaffirm the need to achieve economic stability, sustained economic growth, promotion of social equity and protection of the environment, while enhancing gender equality, women's empowerment and equal opportunities for all, and the protection, survival and development of children to their full potential, including through education.

**Paragraph 31.** We emphasize that sustainable development must be inclusive and peoplecentred, benefiting and involving all people, including youth and children. We recognize that gender equality and women's empowerment are important for sustainable development and our common future. We reaffirm our commitments to ensure women's equal rights, access and opportunities for participation and leadership in the economy, society and political decision-making.

**Paragraph 45.** We underscore that women have a vital role to play in achieving sustainable development. We recognize the leadership role of women and we resolve to promote gender equality and women's empowerment and to ensure their full and effective participation in sustainable development policies, programmes and decision-making at all levels.

## ***General Assembly resolution 55/2 “United Nations Millennium Declaration”***

### **Chapter V. Human rights, democracy and good governance**

25. We resolve therefore:

(...)

- To promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable.
- To combat all forms of violence against women and to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

## **4. Importance of accountability and good governance**

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### ***General Assembly resolution 66/288 “The future we want”***

**Paragraph 10.** We acknowledge that democracy, good governance and the rule of law, at the national and international levels, as well as an enabling environment, are essential for sustainable development, including sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger. We reaffirm that to achieve our sustainable development goals we need institutions at all levels that are effective, transparent, accountable and democratic.

**Paragraph 76.** We recognize that effective governance at the local, subnational, national, regional and global levels representing the voices and interests of all is critical for advancing sustainable development. The strengthening and reform of the institutional framework should not be an end in itself, but a means to achieve sustainable development.

## ***General Assembly resolution 55/2 “United Nations Millennium Declaration”***

### **Chapter III. Development and poverty eradication**

13. Success in meeting these objectives depends, inter alia, on good governance within each country. It also depends on good governance at the international level and on transparency in the financial, monetary and trading systems. We are committed to an open, equitable, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory multilateral trading and financial system.

### **Chapter V. Human rights, democracy and good governance**

24. We will spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development.

25. We resolve therefore:

(...)

- To strengthen the capacity of all our countries to implement the principles and practices of democracy and respect for human rights, including minority rights.

## ***World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa (2002)***

We agree that there is a need for private sector corporations to enforce corporate accountability, which should take place within a transparent and stable regulatory environment.

## ***UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights***

**Foundational Principles, 11.** Business enterprises should respect human rights. This means that they should avoid infringing on the human rights of others and should address adverse human rights impacts with which they are involved.