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30 November 2012

Excellencies,

I write to you, on behalf of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (the Committee), as representatives of States parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (the Covenant), in respect of the elaboration of the United Nations' post-2015 development agenda.

The Committee would like to underline the importance of the link between the post-2015 development agenda and human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights. The events of the last two years have demonstrated all too clearly the risks of not doing so. In various countries, including several of the development achievements of the previous decade, underlying repression, deprivation and inequality led to violent mass protest and ultimately undermined major parts of the development gains.

The Committee considers that linking development with human rights places the spotlight on equality and development-for-all, while reducing social and political tensions driven by discrimination and inequality; supports participation in development of and empowers individuals to have a say in development decisions; seeks improvements not only in the number of individuals accessing services but also in the quality of those services, as set out in the Covenant and sets a social protection floor which everyone has a right to access. By linking development goals to legal obligations of States under the Covenant, the responsibilities of development actors can also be better defined. This should provide additional motivation to move forward nationally on the promises made at conferences globally.

The Committee is encouraged by States' recognition in the Rio+20 Outcome of the link between human rights and development, and in particular the importance and utility of future Sustainable Development Goals being consistent with international law, including international human rights law. In this regard, I draw your attention to the Committee's Statement in the context of the Rio+20 Conference 'The Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication' of May 2012 and its Statement on the Importance and Relevance of the Right to Development adopted in May 2011.

All States parties to the International Covenant
on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

It is important now to move forward on these commitments. Next year will be critical as the General Assembly elaborates the post-2015 development agenda, particularly at the Special Event on the Millennium Development Goals and through the work of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals following-up on the Rio+20 Conference.

The Committee calls on all States parties to the Covenant, to make an explicit link to human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights, in these contexts. The Committee encourages them to place the individual at the heart of the work on the post-2015 development agenda so that new development goals, as well as indicators and benchmarks to meet them, are explicitly aligned with human rights principles and treaty standards, including freedom from discrimination, equality between men and women, participation and inclusion, transparency and accountability. In particular, the Committee would like to highlight the importance of accountability and of disaggregating data, focusing inter alia on disadvantaged and marginalised groups, monitoring budgets and policies based on human rights obligations, and introducing appropriate tools for oversight, dialogue and peer review that will strengthen the likelihood of achieving development goals sustainably.

For its part, the Committee will remain engaged in this reflection on the post-2015 development agenda. It will continue to monitor the effects of development on the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights. It will draw on development data and reports in its constructive dialogue with States. If the post-2015 development agenda is explicitly linked to human rights, not only will this information be more relevant to the Committee's deliberations but the Committee could also more clearly identify development achievements as well as challenges. Through its constructive dialogue with States parties, the Committee will also encourage the latter to cooperate internationally to meet the sustainable development goals.

I take this opportunity to encourage you, as representatives of States parties to the Covenant, to play your part in drawing up a human rights-based post-2015 development agenda.

Please accept, Excellencies, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Ariranga G. Pillay
Chair
Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights