

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS AT GENERAL ASSEMBLY EVENT TO COMMEMORATE 25TH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT
New York, 8 November 2011**

Your Excellency, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the General Assembly,
High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay,
Distinguished Chairpersons of the General Assembly's First, Second and Third
Committees,
Ladies and gentlemen,

A quarter of a century ago, the Declaration of the Right to Development gave hope to millions of people around the world.

It brought all human rights together. And it centred development around people.

After the Declaration was adopted, it was re-affirmed over and over.

At the Rio Conference on the Environment and Development. At the World Conference on Human Rights. And in the Millennium Development Goals.

On paper, the Declaration lived. In practice, it languished.

Economic growth and material wealth were mistaken for true development.

Visible, accountable hands in government ceded too much to the invisible, unreliable hands of the market.

Human rights were too often subverted for financial gain.

Our environment was sacrificed for the economy.

Lavish luxury fed off of deplorable want.

In 1986, this visionary Declaration committed the world to true development.

By 2011 there has been significant progress. The MDGs galvanized the world into action.

But for too many people, basic needs are a distant dream.

As we meet, calls for change echo across the world.

We cannot take refuge in silence.

That is why my advice to world leaders is consistent.

I tell them to listen.

Listen to your people. Hear their concerns. Pay close attention.

That is what I do in my travels around the world.

In refugee camps. In the ashes of war. In cooperatives and communities. The languages are different, but the message is the same:

Help us to help ourselves.

People do not want handouts.

They are not interested in charity.

All they ask is the right to build their own future.

The Declaration demands this empowerment. It states that, “All human beings have a responsibility for development, individually and collectively.”

Now is the time to realize the Declaration’s ideals. So that people can live with dignity ... free of want or fear.

When we grant people the right to unlock their own potential, we trigger a transformation of our world.

That is why I am calling for a new social contract.

I have just returned from Cannes, where I urged G20 leaders to write this new social contract for the 21st Century.

Not only for people living in the world’s wealthiest nations, but for all.

I proposed a Global Jobs Pact.

We need a recovery that generates jobs, so that growth is sustainable and inclusive.

The Social Protection Floor is an important initiative. The specifics change from country to country – but the objectives are consistent:

To reduce poverty.

To shield people from shocks.

And to create equality so that societies can flourish.

When the floor is protected, no one will fall through the cracks.

Now is the time to invest in development.

We must invest in people, especially women and youth. They make up more than two-thirds of the global population. But they have more than numbers. Women and youth have the ability and energy to drive progress.

In the process, they can stabilize whole societies.

When we give women equal opportunities, we right a social injustice. When we give youth jobs, we transform frustration into production.

In this world marred by violence and war, we must remember that development is the path to peace.

At the same time, as the Declaration shows, peace is a path to development.

Our world is drowning in arms. Illegal weapons are flooding markets and wreaking havoc on communities.

We have to beg for funds for peace operations while military spending tops a trillion dollars.

Disarmament, economic issues and human rights are all crucial for development. That is why I am pleased to be joined today by the Chairs of the General Assembly's First, Second and Third Committees.

When we take on global problems as a whole, the solutions cut across categories.

The food, fuel and financial crises are undermining the right to development.

We are responding by making comprehensive, sustainable development the UN's top priority. Next year's Rio+20 Conference is our chance to define a path to the future we want.

Excellencies,

Senegalese justice Keba M'Baye was a champion of the Right to Development.

He said: “To develop is to improve human life.”

And to that end, he called for more than economic development ... more than technological progress ... more than material wealth.

He called for “development of the mind.”

He said, “Development of thought must go hand-in-hand with technological development... because the two activities sustain each other.”

Today we need more than a meeting – we need a meeting of the minds.

To realize the inalienable right to development – for all.

Thank you.