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The Right to Development: Principles, Realization and Challenges

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The main theme of the 54th session of the Human Rights Council revolves around economic, social, and cultural rights, with a particular focus on the right to development. This article addresses the importance of the right to development, the Iranian perspective on it, and the impact of various challenges on its full and effective realization.

Le thème principal de la 54e session du Conseil des droits de l'homme est axé sur les droits économiques, sociaux et culturels, et plus particulièrement sur le droit au développement. Cet article aborde l'importance du droit au développement, la perspective iranienne sur ce droit et l'impact des différents facteurs qui entravent sa mise en œuvre concrète et efficace.

El tema principal de la 54ª sesión del Consejo de Derechos Humanos gira en torno a los derechos económicos, sociales y culturales, con especial énfasis en el derecho al desarrollo. Este artículo aborda la importancia del derecho al desarrollo, la perspectiva iraní al respecto y las repercusiones de diversos desafíos para su plena y efectiva realización.

The right to development is a human right that emphasizes the need for equitable and participatory development processes. It recognizes the role of individuals, communities, nations and States in shaping development policies and programs, and underscores the importance of international cooperation and solidarity in realization of this important right. While facing challenges and critiques, the right to development remains a significant tool in promoting global justice and equality, and serves as a reminder of the interdependence of human rights and development in the pursuit of a more just and inclusive world.

Development is a multidimensional concept that encompasses social, economic, and political progress of individuals and societies. The right to development is a fundamental human right recognized by the international community, which asserts that all individuals and peoples have the right to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy the benefits of development. This right is enshrined in various international instruments which deserve to pay more attention to it in the field of human rights as a means to achieve global justice and equality.

Despite its noble aspirations, the realization of the right to development at the international level faces various challenges and barriers, including inequality, poverty, limited access to resources, geopolitical factors, trade barriers, lack of effective international cooperation and solidarity, and inadequate participation and representation of developing and less-developed countries in the global financial and economic order. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts at national and international levels to promote inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development that respects and protects the rights of all individuals and nations.

From a conceptual point of view, the right to development emerged in the 1970s as a response to the disparities between developed and developing countries. The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order in 1974, which recognized the “right of every country to adopt the economic and social system that it deems the most appropriate for its own development and not to be subjected to discrimination of any kind as a result”. It therefore called upon States to “exert maximum efforts with a view to securing the implementation of the present Declaration, which is one of the principal guarantees for the creation of better conditions for all peoples to reach a life worthy of human dignity”. The Declaration also emphasized the need for equitable international economic relations and called for cooperation among States to promote economic and social development. Subsequently, the right to development was further elaborated in the Declaration on the Right to Development adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1986.

The realization of the right to development requires significant resources and cooperation among States. Inequality and discrimination, both within and among countries, pose significant challenges to the realization of the right to development. These inequalities and discriminatory practices can limit the ability of certain nations, groups and individuals to fully participate in and benefit from the development process, leading to marginalization and exclusion.

Poverty and economic disparities remain major obstacles to the realization of the right to development. Many developing countries face challenges such as lack of access to basic needs, limited economic opportunities, and inadequate social protection measures. Economic disparities and poverty can hinder individuals and communities from accessing education, health care, and other essential services, and can perpetuate cycles of poverty and exclusion.

Unequal access to resources, such as land, water, and natural resources, or lack of access to financial resources to develop infrastructure, can be a barrier to the realization of the right to development. In many cases, disadvantaged peoples and nations face challenges in accessing and controlling their resources that are necessary for their livelihood and well-being.

Geopolitical factors, such as conflicts, wars, unilateral coercive measures and political instability as well as colonial legacies, can significantly impede the realization of the right to development at the national, regional and international levels. These factors can disrupt economic activities, destroy infrastructure, displace populations, and create humanitarian crises, leading to social, economic, and developmental setbacks. Conflicts and political instability can also hinder international cooperation and solidarity, which are critical for addressing global development challenges. Geopolitical tensions, conflicts, and diverging interests among nations can all hinder collective efforts towards achieving inclusive and sustainable development.

Limited access to markets and trade barriers, such as tariffs, quotas, and trade restrictions, mainly emanating from imposition of unilateral coercive measures and over-compliance towards these measures, can hinder the ability of developing countries to fully participate in global trade, financial and economic activities and to benefit from international economic cooperation. Unequal trade relations and imbalanced global economic systems can result in unfair trade practices that limit the opportunities for developing countries to access global markets and realize their development potential.

International cooperation and solidarity are essential for the realization of the right to development, as recognized in the Declaration on the Right to Development. However, limited international cooperation, including inadequate financial assistance, imposing unilateral measures against technology transfer to developing countries, and lack of sufficient capacity building support, can pose challenges to the realization of the right to development, especially for developing countries.

Meaningful participation and representation of peoples and nations in an indiscriminate manner, in decision-making processes related to development at different levels, are crucial for ensuring that their rights and interests are taken into account. However, in many cases at the international level, countries face challenges in accessing decision-making forums, and their voices and perspectives are not adequately represented. This can result in policies and strategies that do not fully address the diverse needs and aspirations of all individuals and communities, hindering the realization of the right to development.

The right to development is based on several key principles. First, it emphasizes the participation of all in decision-making processes related to development policies and programs. This principle underscores the importance of empowering people to actively contribute to the planning and implementation of development initiatives that affect their lives. Second, the right to development promotes non-discrimination, equality, and social justice. It recognizes that development efforts should benefit all, without discrimination. Third, the right to development emphasizes international cooperation and solidarity among States. It highlights the responsibility of States to cooperate in order to create a global environment conducive to development and to ensure that the benefits of development are shared equitably among all peoples.

The principle of equal opportunity is an important element of the right to development. It is obviously assumed that all individuals and groups within the countries and all nations at the global level, should have an equal chance to participate in and benefit from the process of development, without discrimination or barriers.

Equal opportunity in the context of the right to development means that everyone should have an equal chance to access and enjoy the benefits of development, including economic opportunities, social services, education, healthcare, and participation in decision-making processes. It recognizes that development efforts should be inclusive and should not discriminate against any particular nation, group or individual.

Furthermore, equal opportunity also encompasses the idea of equitable distribution of the benefits of development. It highlights the need to ensure that the benefits of development are shared among all in a fair and just manner, without any discrimination or exclusion. The principle of equal opportunity in the context of the right to development emphasizes the need for inclusiveness, non-discrimination, and equitable distribution of benefits in development processes. It highlights the importance of ensuring that everyone has an equal chance to participate in and benefit from the process of development.

The Declaration on the Right to Development recognizes both individuals and nations as subjects of the right to development. The Declaration emphasizes that development is a universal right that applies to all individuals, as well as to all peoples and nations, including those who are subject to foreign domination, occupation, or other forms of external coercion.

According to the Declaration, the right to development is an inalienable human right, and both individuals and nations have the right to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy the benefits of development. The Declaration recognizes that development should be people-centered and should aim at improving the well-being and quality of life of all individuals and communities, while respecting their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Furthermore, the Declaration emphasizes the importance of international cooperation for the realization of the right to development. It highlights the need for countries to work together in a spirit of partnership and solidarity to create a global environment that is conducive to development, and to ensure that the benefits of development are shared among all nations in a fair and equitable manner.

In conclusion, the right to development both as a concept and as a human right, encompasses opportunities for the international community that go beyond the challenges currently faced by humanity. Recognizing this right and striving for its realization, ensuring its recognition and benefiting from it for all, is the only viable choice. Any opposition to the right to development will hinder humanity's efforts in achieving equality and well-being for all.

It is not about burdening one country with the responsibility of another country's development or creating new commitments and obligations for

States to develop others. It is sufficient for developed nations not to obstruct or impede developing countries with the will and capacity for development along their path. If people are allowed to determine their own destiny, there will certainly be no need for humanitarian assistance except in very limited and urgent cases.

Before countries have become in need for humanitarian aid, they have been deprived of their right to determine their own fate, utilize their resources, and benefit from their capacities. The international community must take a meaningful and historic step regarding the right to development.

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