



General Assembly

Distr.: General
28 January 2025

Original: English

Human Rights Council

Fifty-eighth session

24 February–4 April 2025

Agenda item 5

Human rights bodies and mechanisms

Report of the 2024 Social Forum^{*}, ^{**}

Summary

In accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 53/20, the 2024 Social Forum on the theme of the contribution of financing for development to the advancement of all human rights for all was held in Geneva on 31 October and 1 November 2024. The present report contains a summary of its discussions, conclusions and recommendations.

* Agreement was reached to publish the present report after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.

** The annex to the present report is circulated as received, in the language of submission only.



I. Introduction

1. The Human Rights Council, in its resolution 53/20, reaffirmed the Social Forum as a unique space for interactive dialogue between the United Nations human rights machinery and various stakeholders, including the contribution of civil society and grass-roots organizations.¹
2. The 2024 Social Forum was held in Geneva on 31 October and 1 November 2024. It focused on the theme of the contribution of financing for development to the advancement of all human rights for all. The President of the Human Rights Council appointed the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, Marc Bichler, as the Chair-Rapporteur of the Forum.
3. The programme of work was prepared under the guidance of the Chair-Rapporteur, with inputs from relevant stakeholders, including Member States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, entities of the United Nations system, academic experts and civil society organizations. The present report contains a summary of the proceedings, conclusions and recommendations. The list of participants is contained in the annex.

II. Opening of the Social Forum

4. In his statement, the Chair-Rapporteur reviewed the challenges in advancing the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the impact of those challenges on progress towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the implications of such challenges for human rights. Financing gaps were growing, with developing countries lacking access to affordable and scalable funding, exacerbated by inadequate policy frameworks and governance misalignment at both national and global levels. Key challenges include stagnation in domestic revenue mobilization since 2010, worsened by tax evasion and inequality in taxation systems. Gender-responsive budgeting remains underutilized, being implemented only in one in four countries. Private finance is insufficiently aligned with sustainability and human rights, with sustainable fund assets accounting for less than 5 per cent of the global fund market in 2023. Financial services are not sufficiently inclusive, especially affecting women and small businesses in developing countries. Official development assistance (ODA) was falling short of targets, reaching only 0.37 per cent of donor-country gross national income (GNI) in 2023. Trade imbalances persisted, with the marginalization of developing countries in global markets and global unmet trade financing demands of \$2.5 trillion annually. Rising protectionism and inequitable trade policies applied by advanced economies further exacerbate those challenges. High sovereign debt burdens severely constrain fiscal space, with many developing countries defaulting on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals owing to unsustainable debt servicing requirements. These systemic issues are compounded by unequal global economic governance; developing countries remain underrepresented in financial decision-making. The Chair-Rapporteur welcomed discussions focusing on reforming international financial systems and looked forward to the contribution of the Social Forum to the upcoming Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in 2025.
5. The Vice-President of the Human Rights Council, Marcela Arias Moncada, underscored the urgent need to align financial mechanisms with social justice and human dignity in order to address rising inequalities, climate change and macroeconomic instability. Financing for development was framed not merely as an economic goal but as a legal obligation to uphold the rights and dignity of all, particularly marginalized and historically excluded groups. Central to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the commitment to “leave no one behind”, with equitable financing prioritizing investments that reduce poverty, improve access to essential services and ensure non-discrimination in the enjoyment of human rights. The Vice-President reviewed the work of the Human Rights

¹ For further details on the Social Forum, see <https://www.ohchr.org/en/events/forums/2024/2024-social-forum>.

Council on financing for development and human rights throughout the year. The sixth intersessional meeting for dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development highlighted the priorities for: reforming the international financial system, including democratizing financial institutions to enable meaningful participation by developing countries; promoting debt relief and restructuring mechanisms, particularly for climate-vulnerable States; and combating illicit financial flows through progressive taxation, international tax cooperation and financial transparency. At the Biennial panel discussion on the right to development there was a call for the adoption of a United Nations framework convention on international tax cooperation to address tax abuse and support equitable development. The Vice-President emphasized the importance of applying a human rights lens to the structural reform of the international financial architecture to secure the maximum available resources for economic, social and cultural rights and to leave no one behind. She encouraged participants to craft recommendations to Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development to ensure an inclusive transition and a sustainable future for all.

6. In a video message, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights drew attention to the severe crisis of inequality and unsustainable debt faced worldwide, especially by developing countries. He reminded participants that 40 per cent of the global population are living in countries where debt servicing surpassed spending on education and health. Since 2020, 5 billion people have grown poorer, and the world's poorest economies have been grappling with their toughest conditions in two decades. These challenges represent a profound human rights failure, exacerbating inequality, fuelling polarization and threatening the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. In anticipation of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, the High Commissioner called for transition from the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda to a new, equitable global agenda in 2025, guided by principles of human rights, international solidarity, cooperation and partnership. Key actions should include overhauling the international financial system to address structural injustices, reducing unsustainable sovereign debt through effective restructuring and increasing access to development finance, particularly concessional financing for those countries least responsible yet most affected by the climate crisis. Strengthening international tax cooperation and implementing progressive tax policies are crucial to combat global tax abuse and to generate resources for sustainable development. He underscored that it was imperative to build inclusive human rights economies that prioritize people and planet instead of profit at all costs and only for a few. He recalled the social and international order envisaged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration on the Right to Development, ensuring dignity, rights and freedoms for all.

7. In a video message, Rabab Fatima, Under Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, noted that vulnerable countries, including the least developed countries, landlocked developing States and small island developing States, faced the compounded challenges of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, climate change and financial instability and that financing for development is crucial in order for these countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to implement the 2030 Agenda while upholding human rights. The High Representative considered that the upcoming Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development would be a unique opportunity to go beyond meeting ODA commitments and to address structural inequalities. In this regard, she proposed four key points to advance human rights and development that needed to be addressed at the upcoming conference: (a) the high debt burdens of vulnerable countries that divert public funds from essential sectors like health and education: the root causes and the reform of the international financial system need to be tackled; (b) investments from the private sector are vital to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals: conditions to mobilize investment and ensure human rights protections through corporate responsibility need to be created; (c) the vulnerability of countries that are suffering the most from climate-related disasters: climate financing needs to be scaled up to ensure accessibility, including the operationalization of the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage; (d) the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States and the future programme of action for landlocked developing

countries² represent renewed partnerships between vulnerable countries and their development partners: these programmes of action, which address the specific challenges of vulnerable countries and promote human rights, resilience to climate impacts and sustainable development, need to be urgently implemented.

III. Summary of proceedings

A. Keynote panel

8. In a video message, the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Navid Hanif, recalled that inadequate access to developmental finance is hindering the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. The current gap is estimated to be \$4 trillion per year. Developing countries face significant barriers, including underinvestment in public services, persistent inequalities and limited capacity for long-term investment. Urgent action is needed to mobilize finance at an unprecedented scale to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Pact for the Future, adopted in September 2024, provided a foundation for reforming the international financial architecture through a human rights lens. The Assistant Secretary-General highlighted four aspects for such reforms: (a) creating a development-oriented international debt architecture, expanding fiscal space for governments to meet their human rights obligations; (b) scaling up access to affordable long-term financing by strengthening public development banks with mandates aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and greater accountability; (c) establishing inclusive international tax rules and mobilizing resources for human rights and investments aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals; (d) reforming global economic governance to ensure that all stakeholders have a meaningful voice in decision-making.

9. Mónica Colomer, Ambassador at Large for Financing for Development of Spain, highlighted that Spain would be hosting the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in Seville from 30 June to 3 July 2025. The objective of the conference is to establish a transformative framework for financing the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Establishment of such a framework will demand consensus on reforms in areas such as international financial architecture, debt sustainability and tax cooperation. Political will and inclusivity are vital to conclude the process. Spain was convinced that development financing and the realization of human rights were interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The Ambassador at Large shared some main ideas that emerged during the negotiation process on the final document of the conference, with a view to forging broader consensus, including taxing wealth; green tax initiatives; fighting illicit financial flows; leveraging special drawing rights; integrating climate, food security and pandemic contingencies into debt agreements to ensure debt sustainability; restructuring financial institutions for equitable representation; integrating a feminist approach; and establishing a follow-up mechanism to monitor commitments. The conference will provide an opportunity to mobilize the necessary resources to advance the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and to promote a global partnership for inclusive sustainable development financing.

10. In a video message, Jayati Ghosh, member of the High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs, focused on the urgent need for reform in the field of international taxation to address tax evasion and illicit financial flows. Tax havens allow multinational corporations and the wealthiest individuals to avoid paying taxes on a massive scale, perpetuating inequality and leaving governments without sufficient resources to fulfil the socioeconomic rights of their people and to invest in climate change alleviation. Progress on international tax cooperation is uneven. Some initiatives, such as the automatic exchange of banking information, aimed at reducing offshore tax evasion, are achieving effective results, while the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/Group of 20 Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting of 2021 was insufficient and

² The draft programme of action is to be adopted at the Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries.

unlikely to be fully implemented owing to contemporary global power relationships. Ms. Ghosh welcomed the United Nations framework convention on international tax cooperation and drew attention to the significant scale of illicit financial flows, particularly from Africa, where they were estimated to have exceeded the sum of ODA during the same period. She also noted the imperative to tax the extremely wealthy, who pay much less taxes in proportion to their incomes. She called for global citizens to urge their governments to work together towards a United Nations tax convention.

11. Agi Veres, Director of the Geneva Representation Office of the United Nations Development Programme, emphasized that while human rights are the foundation for a peaceful and sustainable world, poverty, inequality and inadequate development financing hinder progress, particularly in developing countries. Addressing those issues requires aligning limited development funding with actions that advance sustainable development and human rights. She outlined three key levels of action: mobilizing more financing from public and private sources for sustainable development; improving the quality of finance to increase returns on investments; and strengthening the capacities of developing countries to attract and apply investments effectively. Ms. Veres highlighted the use of integrated national financing frameworks as a vital tool to achieve those ends. The frameworks enable countries to align financing with national development goals, ensuring inclusivity and participation. Currently, 85 countries are using integrated national financing frameworks to make informed financial decisions, with several already implementing reforms. Examples include the blue bonds initiative of Cabo Verde, the Thai guidebook for companies on the impact of the Sustainable Development Goals and the budgeting system for the Sustainable Development Goals in Colombia. She recommended that reform of the international financial system should advance in a synergetic manner, with approaches and commitments to promote alignment of financing with the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level.

12. Attiya Waris, Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights, emphasized the critical need to rethink global financial systems to address human and planetary well-being. While the world has ample resources, they have been mismanaged, leading to economic crises, inequality and environmental degradation. Many financial resources remain outside formal systems owing to a lack of trust, resulting in resource scarcity within regulated networks. This disconnect is also manifested in issues like debt burdens, illicit financial flows and the prioritization of profit over sustainable development. The Independent Expert criticized current conversations on global financing, which are usually based on power relations and focused excessively on formulas rather than addressing root issues, such as uncaptured financial resources. These failures forced developing countries to take on unsustainable debt, exacerbating vulnerabilities. Additionally, the lack of global regulations for private bonds and credit rating agencies contributed to financial instability and only highlighted the fragmented nature of the system, which required urgent reform. She expressed concern about the multiple frameworks addressing financing, development and human rights and hoped that collectively the efforts would ultimately address the core issue: the well-being of people and planet.

13. During the general discussion, delegates from Algeria, Bangladesh, Belarus, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, China, Cuba, Ethiopia, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mexico, Pakistan, Panama, Portugal, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia, the State of Palestine and the European Union made statements. In addition, representatives of Association Dewran, Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII, the Center for Economic and Social Rights, Comitato Alberto, Dienst am Nächsten Basel, European Network on Debt and Development, FIAN International, the Global Policy Forum, Green and Better World, the International Association of Ahmadi Architects and Engineers, International-Lawyers.org, NEXA GreenTech GmbH, the United Nations – United States Council of Organizations, World Vision International, the Deputy Ombudsman of the Kyrgyzstan and an academic also intervened. Speakers underscored the global financing challenges, with developing countries facing limited access to financing, rising debt burdens and economic inequality. These barriers hindered progress on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the achievement of economic, social and cultural rights, including efforts to combat poverty, address climate change and foster inclusive policies. Participants called for reform of the international financial architecture, emphasizing

inclusivity, equity and accountability. Proposals included debt restructuring, innovative financing solutions and increased ODA. Several participants also highlighted specific strategies, such as debt for development swaps, targeted investments in marginalized communities and enhancing fiscal space for public welfare programmes. Several speakers called for building momentum for the upcoming Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, aiming to reshape global economic governance and ensure alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals. In her concluding remarks, Ms. Waris highlighted the absence of an international financial architecture to address global financial symptoms and called for real multilateralism in decision-making, including with regard to credit rating, determination of interest rates for development and dispute resolution.

B. International development cooperation

14. Carsten Staur, Chair of the Development Assistance Committee of OECD, stressed the vital role of ODA in international development cooperation. Despite increasing global needs, only five members of OECD meet the United Nations target of allocating 0.7 per cent of their GNI to ODA, revealing a significant gap in global solidarity. In a global context of growing autocracy and shrinking civic space, Mr. Staur emphasized the integral role of civil society in delivering development and protecting human rights. Mr. Staur urged members of the Development Assistance Committee to increase development assistance, emphasizing the urgency of addressing global needs with a clear focus on the poorest and most vulnerable. He also highlighted the importance of strengthening accountability, transparency and best practices through new guidelines and recommendations developed by the Development Assistance Committee to address poverty and inequality and to help partner countries to overcome implementation gaps.

15. Mihir Kanade, Professor and Head of the Department of International Law and Director of the Human Rights Centre at the University for Peace and Chair of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development, referred to the meaning of development as articulated in the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development and emphasized that it is the rights holders themselves who must determine what development means to them. International development cooperation should align with development priorities identified by recipient countries. Misalignment constrains the autonomy of countries in determining their own development paths, perpetuating dependency and inequality. Mr. Kanade questioned aid effectiveness under the current disparity in aid distribution, noting that a significant portion of ODA was attributable to donor country spending on refugees and aid to Ukraine, the latter surging from \$1 billion in 2021 to \$17.8 billion in 2022, while aid to least developed countries and sub-Saharan Africa during the same period declined by 5.2 per cent and 8.6 per cent, respectively. He also expressed concern over the inclusion of climate finance and aid for trade in the calculation of total official support, arguing that it distorts data and diverts resources from critical development needs. To address those challenges, Mr. Kanade proposed the adoption of a normative right to development framework, treating cooperation as a legally binding obligation and not as mere charity. He also proposed innovative solutions, including taxing international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to finance the work of the United Nations in development and human rights.

16. Fadhel Kaboub, Associate Professor of Economics at Denison University, President of the Global Institute for Sustainable Prosperity and Senior Adviser at Power Shift Africa, analysed the lasting colonial economic structures hindering the development of Africa. The continent continues to be a source of cheap raw materials for industrialized nations, a consumer of technologies and industrial goods from the Global North and a recipient of outdated technologies disguised as development aid. Its major economic deficiencies comprise structural food deficits, energy deficits and a backward industrial base that lock the continent at the bottom of the global value chain. Such deficiencies lead to trade deficits, inflation and more external borrowing, forcing countries into a vicious circle of increased extractivism, less fiscal space and reduced autonomy to invest in people's well-being. To transform this deficient structure, investments must be channelled towards food sovereignty, agroecology and renewable energy infrastructure. Mr. Kaboub stressed that Africa has a

complementarity of resources and capabilities and that, if equipped with manufacturing technology, it would not need any external financing. He concluded that the global economic “suction” mechanism imposed on the Global South cannot deliver human rights and hoped that the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development would address structural transformation and enable a win-win situation for both hemispheres.

17. Isabelle Durant, member of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development, addressed climate change as a key component in global governance. She highlighted the asymmetry between the countries most responsible for climate change emissions and those most affected by its consequences. Developing countries, especially those with the lowest emissions, are often disproportionately affected. She asserted that those countries face significant barriers in securing the necessary investments for renewable energy production, primarily due to high interest rates. Ms. Durant emphasized the need for equitable multilateral mechanisms that allow developing countries to determine their own climate paths in international climate cooperation. Innovative financing mechanisms and climate certifications could be instrumental in ensuring responsible actions of climate adaptation and mitigation. In conclusion, she underscored the importance of fostering genuine cooperation and advocated the use of climate diplomacy to navigate the challenges responsibly and inclusively.

18. Panellists further discussed statistics on different categories of ODA, particularly spending on hosting immigrants, climate finance and aid to Ukraine. Mr. Staur explained that humanitarian burden-sharing is the reason why donor countries count refugee support in their ODA figures and attributed the abrupt surge of ODA for refugees and Ukraine to the aggression of the Russian Federation. He noted that the integration of climate aspects into ODA has yielded positive results. He emphasized the important role of civil society in ensuring aid effectiveness and invited further deliberations on how ODA can leverage greater private investment. Mr. Kaboub highlighted the projection of 216 million internally displaced persons due to climate change by 2050, as estimated by the World Bank, underscoring significant gaps in resilient infrastructure building in the Global South. Ms. Durant proposed streamlined documentation processes to regularize refugees but also acknowledged the immigration pressures on recipient countries. Mr. Kanade expressed concerns about whether countries in urgent need for development are consistently receiving increased aid.

19. During the interactive dialogue, delegates from Bangladesh, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ethiopia, France, Mauritania, Pakistan and Serbia made statements. Representatives of Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII, ASLI, the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Loreto Generalate, a representative of the Ombudsman of Kyrgyzstan, a representative of the University of Europe for Applied Sciences and a doctoral student from Western University, Canada, took the floor. Participants asked for reforms to the global financial system to address the growing inequalities between developed and developing countries. A representative voiced concerns over the declining ODA to the least developed countries and urged for more concessional resources to support economically vulnerable countries. Other recommendations included increasing investment in South-South cooperation, prioritizing climate finance and promoting women’s participation in sustainable development. One representative criticized unilateral sanctions that obstruct development and undermine international cooperation. Panellists concluded by reiterating the inadequacy and inefficiency of ODA, the need to generate more financial resources for development and the responsibilities of developed countries to address global climate crises, including through the provision of climate grants, the transfer of essential technology and debt cancellation. Mr. Staur also expressed concern that the decoupling and disintegration of the global trade system could lead to significant losses for developing countries.

C. International trade as an engine of development

20. In a video message, Muhammadou M.O. Kah, Ambassador of the Gambia to Switzerland and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other international organizations in Geneva shared his country’s journey in harnessing international trade as a driving force for development. He pointed out the importance of having a strategic national trade policy and its integration with regional

initiatives and multilateral trade facilitation agreements, which contributed to the building of regional supply chains and allowed countries like the Gambia to expand access to global markets. He highlighted agriculture and fisheries as pillar industries in the Gambia, noting the adoption of sustainable practices and community-led resource management to promote environmental and economic sustainability. Mr. Kah exemplified efforts of the Gambia in leveraging digital trade to enhance value creation and promote efficiency in value chains. He noted that environmental sustainability, a green economy and climate resilience were central to his country's trade strategy. Furthermore, the Ambassador emphasized the importance of adapting to geopolitical and economic shifts, building diversified trade partnerships and enhancing the economic resilience of small least developed countries such as the Gambia.

21. Anoush Der Boghossian, head of the Trade and Gender Unit of WTO, highlighted the interlinkages between trade and gender, sharing key trends in trade policymaking that advance women's economic empowerment. She acknowledged that women are better employed and paid in the trade sector than in other sectors. However, negative gender social norms can create new types of trade barriers, such as lack of access to finance for women entrepreneurs. She highlighted different ways in which women contribute to trade expansion, noting that gender equality makes companies more innovative. Furthermore, women contribute greatly to trade in agriculture. Ms. Der Boghossian showcased WTO initiatives on trade and gender, starting in 2016, including extensive training programmes for government officials, policymaking tools to help governments integrate gender into their policies and a focus on research, in particular through the creation of the WTO Gender Research Hub in 2022. She affirmed that the issue of trade and gender has been progressing exponentially at WTO.

22. In a video message, Surya Deva, Special Rapporteur on the right to development, shared his views on how to leverage trade to ensure inclusive and sustainable development. He encouraged all stakeholders to think about trade not as an end in itself but merely as a means that ultimately benefits people and planet. Following that approach, and especially from the perspective of developing countries, he highlighted the current challenges facing the world, including conflicts, climate change and protective trade measures, all of which generate significant inequalities. In that context, he suggested that people should reimagine international trade for the future and he advanced several proposals: (a) fair rules to ensure full participation of all countries in international trade; (b) integration of human rights considerations into trade agreements without their use as protective measures by developed countries; (c) ending the dumping of toxic substances and exporting pollution to the Global South; and (d) a fair dispute settlement system. Mr. Deva expressed hope that international trade could be used in a way to promote the right to development of everyone, everywhere.

23. Kinda Mohamadieh, senior researcher and legal adviser at the Third World Network in Geneva, addressed the longstanding call for reform of the multilateral trading system within WTO. Prompted by developing countries since the establishment of WTO, this demand originated in the realization that the existing rules were made without equitable representation and benefitted countries endowed with capital and technology while taxing labour-oriented countries. The call for reform was thus rearticulated, particularly by the African Group, to adapt WTO to better address the industrialization of developing countries and the structural transformation of their economies. However, a concerning trend of recasting the narrative on reform has recently emerged, usually in the form of "trade plus" another regime, either gender or environment. This reformulation supports the efforts of industrialized countries to sustain their competitiveness in the global market and diminishes opportunities for developing countries. Ms. Mohamadieh stressed that the right approach should be to seek reconciliation between these regimes, adapting trade rules to allow developing countries the policy space to achieve sustainability objectives, rather than imposing unilateral trade restrictive measures, which are usually counterproductive and undermine the basis of multilateral cooperation.

24. Hana Daoudi, Economic Affairs Officer at the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), elaborated on how trade serves as an engine for development and the shared experiences of ECE in this regard. She observed that for trade to work for development, it must start with three fundamental elements: (a) capacity-building for citizens and enterprises to have sustainable livelihoods; (b) fair and

open trade principles within the WTO agreement; and (c) creating the link between trade and development. Ms. Daoudi presented the efforts of the Commission in harmonizing regulatory standards in different spheres to promote trade for development, including digitalization, environmental, agricultural, infrastructure and gender-responsive standards. She also presented the ECE traceability system, which was developed to help enterprises to transparently trace their responsibilities and actions in respecting human rights and protecting the environment. She also highlighted the difficulties for experts across the ECE region to agree on any regulatory standard and encouraged countries to work together to make changes that benefit all their citizens.

25. During the interactive dialogue, delegates from Bangladesh and Ukraine made statements. Representatives of Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII; Dynamique chrétienne pour la défense des droits humains et de l'environnement; Green and Better World; Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety; Jamii Asbl; Justice Pour Tous Internationale; Monash University, Australia; Nanjing World Youth Development Service Center; and Nebrija MUN Association intervened. Participants acknowledged trade as a powerful driver of development if trade policies integrate human rights concerns, promoting social well-being and environmental sustainability. They called for a fair, rules-based multilateral trade system and expressed concerns about rising protectionism, trade restrictions and geopolitical tensions, including the devastating impact of war on supply chains. Participants also advocated for greater support for the least developed countries and emphasized the need for equitable resource distribution and enhanced corporate responsibility. Some speakers raised human rights concerns in trade practices, including the exploitation of workers in industries such as mining, manufacturing and agriculture. Panellists concluded by underscoring the urgency of aligning trade policies with human rights considerations to benefit people and planet.

D. Debt and debt sustainability

26. Ugo Panizza, Professor of Economics at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, acknowledged the challenges to enhance sustainable development without intensifying the current debt crises, especially in the context of global climate change. He pointed out that one of the main reasons why some advanced economies do not run into debt crises, even at higher debt levels, is attributable to their enhanced debt structures. He therefore emphasized the importance of debt structure reforms in building resilience against debt crises in emerging economies. Mr. Panizza distinguished between debt crises as solvency crises and liquidity crises, and warned of the potential of liquidity crises escalating into solvency crises when people lose trust in a country's solvency and interest rates are driven up. Using the case of the European Central Bank, he underlined the responsibility of central banks in solving liquidity crises, but also admitted the constraints faced by central banks in developing countries as their debts are mostly in foreign currencies. He suggested that a step in the right direction to solve the debt crises of developing countries is to switch from lending in foreign currencies to lending in domestic currencies so that their central banks could play their role in addressing the crises. He stressed that such a change requires political will.

27. Senior Economic Affairs Officer at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Penelope Hawkins, addressed the issue of long-term external debt in developing countries. She expressed concern about the risk of expanding or even doubling public or publicly guaranteed debt in order to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and climate commitments. She highlighted the issue of overgrowth of debt servicing in developing countries, which could reach a median of 16 per cent of their export revenue and three times as high as the limit set for Germany after the Second World War, as set out in the London Agreement in 1953. She underscored the significant role of balance of payment constraints in economic recovery. Ms. Hawkins appealed for substantially reduced cost of debt and considered concessional finance as a primary solution and noted that rechanneling special drawing rights to multilateral development banks for higher leverage would be a concrete measure. She also proposed implementing targeted technical assistance programmes to enhance the capability of developing countries to conduct debt sustainability analysis. She

noted the contribution of UNCTAD in this regard, enabling developing countries to duly report their debt situation to multilateral institutions so as to be properly included in concessional financing programmes.

28. The Independent Expert on foreign debt, Attiya Waris, noted the complexity of sovereign debt restructuring issues, particularly in countries of the Global South. She emphasized several challenges for developing countries in debt, including debt mismanagement throughout different political cycles, unpredictable events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of publicity of debt agreements and discrepancies between the decisions of governments and credit rating entities on debt solutions. She highlighted conundrums in debt restructuring at both domestic and international levels. Referring to the situation in Zambia, she pointed out the multiplicity of stakeholders as a major hindrance in international debt restructuring. She also explained the reasons for debt restructuring in some countries by stressing the lack of support from the international financial system, including the inability to obtain additional financial resources on time, such as climate funds pledged but not honoured, and the absence of a global dispute resolution mechanism regarding debt issues. She also mentioned currency fluctuations as an important factor impeding successful debt restructuring and concluded by conveying her interest and her hope for further discussion on the topic in multilateral platforms.

29. Senior Researcher at the National and Technical Research Council in Argentina, Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky, addressed the importance of human rights issues in debt sustainability analysis and underscored the significant role of gender-based discrimination in that context. He strongly advocated applying a gender approach to debt analysis in international financial organizations. He noted multiple dimensions that set the foundations of the current social order that influence the outcomes of economic reforms in terms of gender. Highlighting the power relations that have significant impacts on policies, Mr. Bohoslavsky proposed feminist strategies in debt analysis that cover the dimensions of both material and intangible conditions of policies and their effects on economic reforms. Referring to the guiding principles on human rights impact assessments of economic reforms³ presented to the Human Rights Council in March 2019, he reiterated the need to implement a human rights-based approach in debt analysis that focuses not only on the repayment ability of countries, but also encourages the fulfilment of human rights, ensuring that the minimum fiscal resources of the State to attain that purpose are not compromised by debt and debt servicing.

30. Iolanda Fresnillo, Policy and Advocacy Manager for Debt Justice at the European Network on Debt and Development, addressed her concerns about the fiscal crises in global south countries brought about by climate change and illustrated the vicious cycle of debt and climate – with one crisis reciprocally bringing about the other. Pointing to the inadequacy of climate financing instruments, she advocated the handling of climate change and debt crises simultaneously. Calling for a new approach towards change in the international debt architecture, Ms. Fresnillo introduced the proposed United Nations framework convention on sovereign debt, aimed at global consensus on responsible lending through all stages of debt. She was critical of the fact that a large part of contemporary climate finance is conducted as business in the form of non-concessional loans, contrary to the spirit of climate finance aid. She hoped that new intergovernmental agreements could be reached at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at its twenty-ninth and thirtieth sessions, and stressed the need for developing countries – those most affected by climate change and debt crises, and not only the creditors – to be part of such discussions and rulemaking processes.

31. During the interactive dialogue, representatives of Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Kyrgyzstan, Mauritania and Serbia made statements. Representatives of Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII, Dynamique chrétienne pour la défense des droits humains et de l'environnement, the Global Policy Forum, the Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety, Nebrija MUN Association, the Netherlands Trade Union Confederation, Observatoire international pour la Paix, la Démocratie et les Droits de l'Homme, Power Shift Africa and the World Council of Churches, as well as the

³ [A/HRC/40/57](#).

Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights also intervened. Several representatives reiterated the necessity and urgency of reforming the current debt architecture through international cooperation. Participants highlighted the role of climate change in exacerbating debt issues in developing countries, the contribution of civil society to sustainable development and the need for enhanced financial support, along with calls for better working conditions to address debt challenges for everyone. Justice, rather than purely technical approaches, was urged as a principle in debt analysis, and concerns about the accountability of international economic policymaking and credit rating agencies in creating debt crises were raised. One representative addressed the long-term impact of debt on youth and advocated for greater youth engagement in the discussions. The panellists concluded by underscoring the need for comprehensive reforms to ensure equitable and sustainable debt solutions.

E. Domestic resource mobilization

32. The Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations Office at Geneva, Sharaf Sheralizoda, highlighted the importance of optimizing domestic resource mobilization to achieve sustainable development and advance human rights. He emphasized the cornerstone role of an equitable taxation system for domestic resource mobilization and stressed the need to tackle tax evasion and combat illicit financial flows in recovering an immense amount of revenue for development. The private sector is a catalyst for development and their investments must be aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. Private businesses are encouraged to invest in areas such as renewable energy and green infrastructure and must ensure corporate responsibility and accountability. Mr. Sheralizoda emphasized the significance of financial inclusion, developing capital markets and investing in human capital, including in education, healthcare and skills development, to build a capable workforce. He showcased the achievements of Tajikistan in investing in renewable energy, with 98 per cent of its electricity generated from hydropower plants, highlighting his country's goal to reach 100 per cent by 2032. He called for the reforming of the international financial system to address climate financing challenges and concluded that domestic resource mobilization policies must be human rights-centred, balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability while emphasizing equity and social justice.

33. The Executive Director of Tax Justice Network Africa, Chenai Mukumba, recognized tax justice as a key mechanism for achieving economic and social justice through the fair taxation of wealthier individuals and multinational corporations. She emphasized three points: the objective of tax justice to advance development goals, its role as the most sustainable form of financing, and the need for progressive and equitable policies that tax the most capable to contribute rather than ordinary and marginalized citizens. She shared the African perspective of advancing tax justice, proposing actions at three levels. At the national level, countries must introspectively examine their domestic resource mobilization measures. Regionally, it is essential to enhance cooperation between countries and to ensure that regional arrangements do not undermine domestic resource mobilization, such as the reduction of trade barriers resulting in fostering illicit financial flows. At the international level, it is imperative to reform the global tax system, which is widely criticized for being incoherent and excluding developing countries in rulemaking. Ms. Mukumba welcomed the 2022 initiative of the Africa Group in proposing a United Nations framework convention on international tax cooperation and stressed that inaction at the international level would lead to undermining domestic efforts.

34. Senior Programme Officer at the South Centre, Abdul Muheet Chowdhary, drew attention to the opportunity presented by the upcoming Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in 2025 to reform the international financial architecture, particularly the tax system, to benefit developing countries and advance human rights. He underscored the importance of completing the United Nations framework convention on international tax cooperation by 2027, including a protocol on cross-border services, which should include digital services in order to end tax exemptions enjoyed by big tech firms. The Fast Track Instrument to Provide for the Streamlined Amendment of Bilateral Double Taxation Treaties prepared by the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax

Matters, would greatly promote international tax standards and enable developing countries to collectively negotiate their tax treaties with developed countries. The instrument needs to be converted into a treaty to be implementable. Public country-by-country reporting of taxes paid by multinational corporations was described as essential to provide transparency on tax avoidance, and a similar model could be considered for global billionaires. An inter-governmentally agreed definition of illicit financial flows that incorporates tax avoidance was needed to address critical gaps in current frameworks. Finally, access to transfer pricing databases should be made a global public good to help developing countries curb profit shifting by multinationals and to combat tax avoidance.

35. Senior Lecturer at the University of the Free State, South Africa, Gerard Kamga, pointed out the disconnect between Africa's economic growth and competitiveness and the poor social conditions of its people due to governance issues, weak institutions and a lack of transparency. He underscored the devastating impact of illicit financial flows, including tax evasion and bribery, which deprive African nations of critical revenue. With multinational corporations operating in Africa failing to pay fair taxes, it is estimated that African countries lost \$50 billion to illicit financial flows in 2015, a figure that had nearly doubled to \$90 billion in 2020, while the income received was \$48 billion in ODA and \$54 billion in foreign direct investment annually, which was almost offset by illicit financial flows. The resource gap caused by illicit financial flows left States incapable of delivering essential services and subsequently trapped in perpetuating debt cycles. In 2015, Africa spent half of the total of \$32.8 billion in loans on interest payments alone. Case studies in Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea and the Congo showed a similarly high level of illicit financial flows. Transparency International revealed that only eight member countries of the Group of 20 required financial institutions to use independent sources to verify beneficial owners in high-risk cases. In closing, Mr. Kamga called for global cooperation to tackle illicit financial flows, emphasizing their disproportionate burden on African countries.

36. The Director of Statistics at UNCTAD, Anu Peltola, emphasized the importance of measuring illicit financial flows, which could contribute to domestic resource mobilization and the realization of human rights. In this context, UNCTAD had developed and tested methodologies and tools to empower national authorities to track illicit financial flows. The 22 country pilot projects conducted by UNCTAD revealed that illicit financial flows were both measurable and substantial, with trade misinvoicing alone accounting for 5 per cent to 30 per cent of the total goods trade value. A high level of illicit financial flows deprived countries of essential resources, weakened their tax base, drove up external debt and exacerbated inequality. In African countries, illicit financial flows resulted in 25 per cent to 60 per cent less spending on education and health. Ms. Peltola underscored that illicit financial flows constituted a human rights issue, particularly impacting vulnerable populations, such as women and children when public funds were diverted, or the poorest households when consumption taxes rose. She underscored the importance of measuring illicit financial flows and reiterated the commitment of UNCTAD to supporting Member States in tracking illicit financial flows in order to restrict crime, redirect financing to the official economy, promote well-being and uphold human rights for all.

37. During the interactive dialogue, delegates from Bangladesh and Iraq made statements. Representatives of World Council of Churches, the Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety, the Institute for Human Rights, the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Loreto Generalate, Asian Women Development and Protection International, Africa culture internationale, Justice for All International, Nebrija MUN Association and Dynamique chrétienne pour la défense des droits humains et de l'environnement also intervened. Speakers discussed the critical challenges and opportunities in domestic resource mobilization. They emphasized the need for a more equitable global tax system, proposing measures such as progressive wealth taxes and pollution taxes to generate resources for poverty alleviation and climate reparations. They called for a more inclusive international framework to combat IFFs, curb corruption, and return the revenues for sustainable development. Several speakers noted that international cooperation is essential for addressing these issues and expressed support for a United Nations global tax convention. Additionally, some stressed the vital role of civil society organizations in domestic resource mobilization discussions and policymaking. Panellists echoed the interventions of the participants, highlighting the critical role of civil society organizations in tackling financing challenges,

the necessity for polluting countries to contribute their fair share towards climate reparations and the urgency of implementing a United Nations global tax convention.

F. Domestic and international private business and finance

38. The Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier De Schutter, highlighted the critical role of governments in creating regulatory frameworks that enable businesses to contribute effectively to poverty alleviation. He emphasized the importance of fair remuneration in supply chains, noting that minimum wages are often inadequate, poorly enforced and exclude informal workers. Globally, over one in five workers live in poverty, despite being employed, and fail to earn a living wage. He urged corporations to avoid cost minimization strategies that undermine fair wages and to ensure equitable pay throughout their supply chains. Mr. De Schutter advocated for formalizing informal work, which comprises 61 per cent of the global workforce and up to 85 per cent of the workforce in sub-Saharan Africa. Such workers typically earn less and lack social protection. Referencing the 2015 recommendation of the International Labour Organization (ILO) aligned with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the transition from the informal to the formal economy, he proposed a two-track approach: safeguarding informal workers' rights, including health, safety and minimum wage protections, while progressively extending formalization and social security to them. He also called for action, including through legislation, to combat discrimination based on socioeconomic disadvantage and to create inclusive and fairer labour markets. This strategy, he argued, is essential for reducing poverty and ensuring equitable labour conditions globally.

39. Human Rights Specialist of the International Organization of Employers, Kinga Dery, highlighted the important role of the private sector in financing for development and advancing human rights for all through multi-stakeholder, public-private partnerships. Addressing global challenges such as poverty and inequality requires unprecedented funding, with the private sector positioned as a key contributor. In addition to investment, businesses drive employment, innovation and economic growth, which are foundational to human rights and resilience and benefit the people most in need. Development finance institutions complement such efforts by funding socially responsible investments that reach underserved communities. Series such as Tech at Work, in partnership with Microsoft, which were launched in several countries in Africa, equip people with digital skills and enable underserved communities to access job opportunities and business pathways, thereby addressing economic inequalities. Ms. Dery stressed that governments must create an enabling environment for businesses to invest responsibly and sustainably by offering legal certainty, strong institutions and clear regulatory frameworks and by addressing the root causes of the lack of decent work opportunities, such as informal work arrangements. Businesses are partners in development, and effective partnerships among governments, development finance institutions, businesses and civil society are key to making any private initiative sustainable in the long term to advance financing for development.

40. Veaceslav Sterbert, managing partner at Exportza, a private trade support institution, noted that micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises play a fundamental role in the Moldovan economy. They represent over 99 per cent of businesses and employ more than 60 per cent of the private sector workforce. However, these enterprises face significant challenges in accessing finance, including high value collateral demands, interest rates exceeding 10 per cent and lengthy approval processes. This situation disproportionately affects women entrepreneurs and rural communities, perpetuating inequalities and reducing opportunities for economic integration. Mr. Sterbert observed that insufficient access to finance directly impacts jobs, education and healthcare, undermining the right to development. He urged more straightforward funding procedures to guarantee accessibility for all business owners. He stressed that access to finance must be complemented with capacity-building measures, including mentorship and training in business management and sustainable practices such as green production. Micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises should have a platform in policymaking to express their needs and propose practical solutions. Achieving those goals requires international cooperation, including the commitment of international financial institutions and donors from the international

community. He emphasized that improving access to finance is not only about economic growth but also about empowering people.

41. Yixuan Peng, doctoral candidate at the Law School of Huazhong University of Science and Technology, China, underscored that financing for development is essential for global progress and highlighted the responsibility of digital businesses in promoting human rights and alleviating poverty. Digitalization is an irreversible global trend, and United Nations reports emphasize the need to transform the digital revolution into a key driving force for development. Digital businesses contribute to poverty reduction by fostering economic growth, creating jobs and enabling resource sharing. However, digital businesses exhibit characteristics distinct from traditional industries, such as concentrated private power and widespread influence. National legislation should therefore adapt to the new characteristics, safeguard data security boundaries and prevent misuse of personal information. Success with rural e-commerce in China proves that digital technology can be promoted in developing countries and rural regions. Ms. Peng pointed out that China has helped small and medium-sized enterprises and vulnerable groups to enjoy the benefits of trade digitalization by creating cross-border e-commerce platforms and providing conveniences and training in customs clearance, logistics, warehousing and technology applications. It is important to strengthen the self-development capabilities of developing countries through multilateral cooperation while assisting them in overcoming the human talent bottleneck through, inter alia, joint research, field teaching and textbook development.

42. The founder of Ananda Foundation, Anand Priya Deo, highlighted the challenges faced by the nearly 1 billion women globally who remain unheard and excluded from decision-making owing to financial dependence. To address this situation, he founded the Ananda Foundation, focusing on empowering women through financial inclusion, particularly in marginalized and tribal communities in India. The foundation operates in three key areas: empowering communities, promoting financial independence and skill development, and improving women's hygiene. It supported 500 girls by providing sanitary pads and raising awareness to combat menstrual stigma, which has increased school attendance. To ensure sustainability, the foundation facilitates income-generating activities like beekeeping and candle-making, while also training women to operate micro-ATMs and to work as bank agents, improving financial accessibility in rural areas. Women now deliver agricultural inputs and advisory services to farmers, reducing costs and enhancing profits. Mr. Deo called for policies that support women entrepreneurs and address hygiene issues through corporate social responsibilities. He advocated the adoption of menstrual leave, which has already been implemented in two states in India. Concluding with a vision to expand the reach of his foundation from 500 to 500,000 women, he emphasized the need for collective action to foster gender parity, financial independence and sustainable livelihoods.

43. During the interactive dialogue, a delegate from India intervened. Representatives of International Organization for the Right to Education and Freedom of Education, Justice for All International, Institute for Reporter's Freedom and Safety, Africa culture internationale, the Institute for Human Rights, Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of the Social Solidarity Economy, Asian Women Development Plan International, Nanjing World Youth Development Service Center, FIAN International and Maloca Internationale made statements. Speakers underscored the significant role of microfinance schemes in fostering financial inclusion and entrepreneurship, particularly for marginalized communities, by providing access to banking, insurance, credit and pension services. Speakers also highlighted the role of the private sector in advancing sustainable development, emphasizing the importance of the alignment of businesses with social and environmental responsibilities. Some stressed fostering partnerships between non-governmental organizations and the private sector to harmonize business objectives with local development priorities. One participant called for transparency and ethical governance in the restitution of funds to foster accountability and human rights. Panellists echoed the interventions of participants, highlighting the integration of human rights and sustainability in business, ensuring living wages for workers, tackling informal labour, optimizing the use of artificial intelligence and collaboration among stakeholders for inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

G. Recommendations on the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development with a focus on least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States

44. The Permanent Representative of the Bahamas to the United Nations in Geneva, Patricia Hermanns, highlighted that small island developing States, including the Bahamas, are particularly vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters, with economies that lacked diversification and were highly dependent on tourism, remittances and imports. Although the World Bank classifies half of small island developing States as high-income economies, that classification is based on gross domestic product, does not reflect the financial realities and restricts access by small island developing States to ODA. Ms. Hermanns introduced the recently endorsed multidimensional vulnerability index to assess structural vulnerabilities more comprehensively. She emphasized that the international financial architecture is outdated and deficient in addressing the needs of small island developing States. Initiatives like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) special drawing rights and the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage established by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at its twenty-seventh session are progressing too slowly. She advocated for bold reforms of the international financial architecture, as manifested in the Pact for the Future, and called for the prioritization of equitable financial access, debt relief, and international reform that aligns with sustainability and human rights at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development. Strengthened international partnerships, resilient development and investments in local capacity are key for small island developing States to thrive amid climate and economic challenges.

45. Bhumika Muchhala, political economist, policy advocate and research scholar at the New School for Social Research, highlighted systemic inequalities in the global financial architecture and the deep need for international cooperation and reform. She underscored that governance within the global financial system remains heavily undemocratic, favouring wealthy countries, and called for an increase in the voting share of developing countries. She drew attention to the impacts of high inflation, driven by interest rate hikes in the United States and currency depreciation in developing countries, which had eroded real income, increased dollar-denominated debt burdens and inflated import bills. Ms. Muchhala advocated binding regulations for non-banking actors, especially in the asset management industry, whose growth generated higher systemic risk for global financial instability. She also called for the leadership of the United Nations in developing regulations to govern credit rating agencies. Additionally, she called for expanding and regularly issuing special drawing rights as a non-debt-creating and unconditional reserve asset to support financial liquidity in developing countries. Finally, she stressed the need to reactivate the developmental role of the State to counteract the harmful effects of debt distress and the deregulated open market system.

46. Unubat Narantsatsralt, student researcher at the International Institute in Geneva, observed that, in the field of international trade, Mongolia faces high transportation costs due to the country's landlocked status and lack of access to seaports. As highlighted in the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024,⁴ it is important for landlocked developing countries like Mongolia to secure support for improving transportation and trade facilitation infrastructure. The development of railway and road networks, facilitated by financing from institutions like the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank, has significantly improved the country's international trade competitiveness. Along with development, Mongolia has made progress in promoting human rights, despite significant inequalities. The National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, adopted by the Government in 2023, is a pioneering milestone aimed at preventing human rights violations in business operations. Moreover, microfinance programmes and rural finance projects supported by organizations such as the United Nations Capital Development Fund tackled gender inequality by empowering women. Loans provided to farmers and herders helped to reduce development gaps between urban and rural areas.

⁴ See <https://www.un.org/en/landlocked/vienna-programme-action>.

Mr. Narantsatsralt called for the United Nations and international financial institutions to sustain support for landlocked developing countries like Mongolia to achieve economic growth and diversification, while reinforcing safeguards for human rights and environmental sustainability.

47. The Deputy Director of the World Economic Research Centre in Cuba, Gladys Cecilia Hernandez, emphasized that the World Bank and IMF need to comply with their commitments to increase the participation of developing countries in decision-making and norm setting made in Monterrey. Voting power should be reassigned to ensure the representation of the interests of all members, allocating an equal number of votes to both debtor and creditor countries. The composition of executive directors should reflect equitable geographical representation. She also suggested that debt management solutions should be comprehensive in nature and address the root causes of debt distress. This involves establishing new or transforming existing international institutions to avoid the trend of these institutions benefitting creditors. Partial or total debt cancellation should be considered to break the cycle of perpetual debt in the most vulnerable countries. Creditors should also increase the adoption of collective action clauses to minimize economic disturbances when debtors encounter difficulties. Ms. Hernandez also emphasized the importance of an international dispute settlement mechanism, adherence to ODA commitments, market access and the reassessment of risk management agencies, all of which suggest the need for systemic reform.

48. The Executive Director of the Southern and Eastern African Trade Information and Negotiations Institute, Jane Nalunga, analysed financing for development challenges from an African perspective. She noted that the major challenge facing most poor countries is their inability to generate adequate resources internally to finance their development, which compelled them to depend on external financing like loans and ODA. A significant root cause of poverty in Africa lies in its structural trade imbalances, characterized by the export of unprocessed raw materials and heavy reliance on imported manufactured goods. The current international trade regime has failed most poor countries. Ms. Nalunga shared several expectations for the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, stipulating that it must: contribute to the reconfiguration of the international economic system to enable the transformation of developing economies towards industrialization and enhanced domestic productive capacity; contribute to democratizing global trade and economic institutions to ensure effective participation of all peoples whose lives are affected by these institutions; and contribute to enabling the policy space of developing countries to determine their own sustainability pathways and policies. Finally, she emphasized that trade and finance are not just ends in themselves but means to an end that promote human rights and sustainable development.

49. During the interactive dialogue, delegates from Cuba, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Trinidad and Tobago made statements. Representatives of Africa culture internationale, Tax Justice Network Africa and the Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII intervened. Speakers highlighted the urgent need to reform the international financial architecture and address systemic inequalities. They called for reforms of governance within international financial institutions to ensure equitable representation and the elimination of discriminatory practices. Several speakers highlighted the importance of debt sustainability. Concrete proposals included the creation of a United Nations-based sovereign debt workout mechanism and specific debt relief measures for small island developing States and least developed countries, which are particularly vulnerable to external shocks and climate crises. Other recommendations included restructuring the global trade system, eliminating discriminatory tariffs, removing unilateral measures that constrain the development of targeted countries and taxing financial institutions such as the World Bank and IMF to finance the work of the United Nations. Climate finance and investments in essential infrastructure, including for healthcare, education and access to water, were identified as critical priorities for action. Participants called for the upcoming Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development to serve as a platform for meaningful, binding commitments to promote equity, sustainability and international solidarity, leading to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through reforms and enhanced international cooperation.

IV. Closing of the Forum, conclusions and recommendations

50. The Chair-Rapporteur delivered closing remarks. He reaffirmed that the Social Forum embodies the vision of multilateralism to address global challenges, promote open discussion and share good practices. It is an opportunity to re-evaluate social and economic policies and to find common ground. He appreciated the interactive nature of the discussions and exchanges among panellists and stakeholders, including Member States, non-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions, trade unions, youth representatives and academia. The Chair-Rapporteur acknowledged that the dynamic dialogue at the Social Forum enriched efforts in the run-up to the Fourth Financing for Development Conference in Seville and shared some of the conclusions and recommendations that emerged from the two-day session.

A. Conclusions

51. **The global fiscal regulatory environment must change so that financial mechanisms advance the promotion of social justice and human dignity.**

52. **Domestic resource mobilization appears to be the most sustainable means of raising resources for development. Efficient and fair taxation is the cornerstone of domestic resource mobilization. On the other hand, profit shifting by multinational companies contributes to the challenges faced by States in strengthening domestic revenue mobilization, given the lack of a global regulatory framework.**

53. **Global financial transactions, including trade, foreign direct investment, remittances and even illicit financial flows, indicate a substantial net flow from the Global South to the Global North – money moving in the wrong direction. Such a “suction” mechanism hinders the Global South from achieving progress in human rights, democracy and justice and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.**

54. **For some developing countries, persisting colonial economic structures, including dependence on export of low value-added goods and import of high value-added goods, are the root causes of poverty and indebtedness. Such imposed colonial economic structures were neither designed for development nor for enabling a just transition, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals or upholding human rights and democracy. It is unrealistic to expect the decarbonization of a system that remains structurally and economically colonized. As the poorest and most vulnerable group, the least developed countries need enhanced global support to overcome structural challenges. Small island developing States contribute less than 1 per cent of global carbon emissions but are most vulnerable to climate change. Ongoing international efforts to assist small island developing States to address climate change do not reflect the necessary urgency.**

55. **While South-South cooperation cannot substitute North-South cooperation and ODA, ODA could catalyse South-South cooperation to help realize complementary international development cooperation.**

56. **The existing international financial system appears insufficient and inefficient in addressing the debt crises in developing countries. The need for the structural reform of the global debt architecture is of great urgency. Transforming the debt structure in developing countries is critical to alleviate the ongoing debt crises and to prevent further debt challenges. To date, approaches in debt analysis have overlooked human rights and justice.**

57. **The lack of a multilateral legal framework defers power to credit rating agencies, which, in turn, determine interest rates levels. In this challenging global context, debt-ridden developing countries are easily pushed to exploit their primary natural resources to repay their debts.**

58. **Trade can serve as a means of generating sustainable development for all. Businesses require an enabling environment provided by States to advance sustainable**

financing for development. Such an environment includes legal certainty, strong institutions and clear regulatory frameworks.

B. Recommendations

59. Governments must prioritize the establishment of tax policies that ensure that all citizens, especially the wealthiest, contribute their fair share while protecting the most vulnerable.

60. In some countries, illicit financial flows are twice the amount of domestic spending on education and health. Combating such flows is critical due to their negative impact on human rights.

61. In addition to national policies, international efforts must be made to ensure efficient domestic resource mobilization, including concrete actions to promote tax justice and tackle illicit financial flows. Inaction at the global level can potentially undermine progress made at the national level.

62. International development cooperation should support national development and thus be aligned with national development priorities determined by developing countries.

63. The integral role of civil society in driving and delivering development outcomes and in protecting human rights should be recognized.

64. Debt analysis should adopt a new approach that highlights human rights and global justice to promote a reform of the international debt architecture, with sustainability at its core.

65. A change of rules in the international trade regime is necessary to ensure the full participation of disadvantaged countries.

66. In order for trade to deliver for the well-being of people and planet, trade agreements, both bilateral and multilateral, should integrate human rights considerations. Likewise, human rights and labour standards must not be used as protective measures or to create disadvantages for other countries.

67. Ensuring gender-inclusive trade requires trade policies that facilitate equal access to markets, equal pay and overcoming gender-biased social norms.

68. Private sector investment should be mobilized. Encouraging public-private partnerships can contribute to employment. Those initiatives must align with the human rights obligations of States and the Sustainable Development Goals, aided by legal frameworks on corporate responsibility.

69. Corporate actors should refrain from cost minimization strategies that can lead to violations of the right to a living wage. The formalization of informal workers must be accelerated, with their human rights protected and social security progressively extended to them.

70. Leveraging digital transformation and bridging digital divides is key to reversing inequalities that hinder development.

71. The governance structure of the international financial institutions must be reviewed and reformed to enable developing countries to actively engage in decision-making processes affecting their development.

72. The Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development provides an occasion for dialogue and commitments for transition of the global economic system to a human rights-based and environmentally sustainable model, prioritizing people and the planet.

Annex

List of participants

States Members of the Human Rights Council

Algeria; Albania; Bangladesh; Belgium; Brazil; Bulgaria; China; Cuba; Dominican Republic; Eritrea; France; Gambia; Georgia; Germany; Ghana; Honduras; India; Indonesia; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Lithuania; Luxemburg; Malaysia; Maldives; Morocco; Netherlands (Kingdom of the); Romania; South Africa; United Arab Emirates.

States Members of the United Nations

Antigua and Barbuda; Armenia; Azerbaijan; Bahamas; Bahrain; Belarus; Colombia; Cyprus; Czechia; Egypt; Ethiopia; Haiti; Hungary; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Iraq; Ireland; Kenya; Latvia; Mauritania; Mauritius; Mexico; Norway; Oman; Pakistan; Panama; Philippines; Poland; Portugal; Republic of Moldova; Russian Federation; Serbia; Spain; Sweden; Tajikistan; Togo; Trinidad and Tobago; Tunisia; Türkiye; Ukraine; Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of); Zambia.

Non-Member States and other entities represented by observers

State of Palestine; The Holy See.

United Nations

International Labour Organization; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States; Department of Economic and Social Affairs; Economic Commission for Europe; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation; Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS; World Health Organization; World Trade Organization.

United Nations human rights mechanisms

Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development, Independent Expert on foreign debt and human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights, Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Special Rapporteur on the right to development.

Intergovernmental organizations

European Union; International Development Law Organization; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; Organization of Islamic Cooperation; South Centre.

National human rights institutions

Deputy Ombudsman of Kyrgyzstan; Provedor de Justiça of Portugal (Ombudsman).

Academic institutions

Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights; the Graduate Institute; International Institute for Sustainable Development; International Institute

in Geneva; Law School of Huazhong University of Science and Technology; Leiden University; New School of Social Research; Monash University; Shandong University Xiaoshulin Teaching Support and Research Organization; Students International Communication Association of Shandong University; University for Peace; University of Europe for Applied Sciences; University of Hong Kong; University of the Free State, South Africa; University of Massachusetts Amherst; Western University, Canada.

Non-governmental organizations and others

Africa culture internationale; Alderliesten ORG; Alliance Internationale des Objectifs de Développement Durable; Amnesty International; Ananda Foundation; APOPO; Asian Women Development and Protection International; Association Dewran; Association ASLI; Association pour le droit à l'initiative économique; Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII; Beyond Lab; Brigadas Populares; Commissariat for Human Rights, Humanitarian Action, and Relations with Civil Society; Center for Economic and Social Rights, Centre Europe-tiers monde; Comitato Alberto; Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches; Dienst am Nächsten Basel; German Agency for International Cooperation; Dynamique chrétienne pour la défense des droits humains et de l'environnement; European Network on Debt and Development; Exportza; FIAN International; Génération Verte 21; Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights; Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, Italy; Genève pour les droits de l'homme: formation international; Global Policy Forum; Green and Better World; Hana Human Rights Organization; Human Rights Watch; Institute for Human Rights; Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety; Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Loreto Generalate; Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of the Social Solidarity Economy; International Association of Ahmadi Architects and Engineers; International Eurasia Press Fund; International Human Rights Protection Association; International-Lawyers.org; International Movement ATD Fourth World; International Organization for the Right to Education and Freedom of Education; International Organization of Employers; Jamii Asbl; Justice for All International; Laboratorio Sant'Anselmo; Maloca Internationale; MUAC – Musique Universelle Arc-en-Ciel; Nanjing World Youth Development Service Center; Nebrija MUN Association; Netherlands Trade Union Confederation; NEXA GreenTech GmbH; Observatoire Géostratégique de Genève; Philanthropy Advisors; Power Shift Africa; Social Justice in Global Development; Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information and Negotiations Institute; Task Force; Tax Justice Network Africa; OneGoal Initiative for Governance; Third World Network; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Youth Hubs; United Nation Association of Serbia; United Nations Association of the United States of America; United Nations – United States Council of Organizations; Vision My Art; World Council of Churches; World Economic Research Centre; World Vision International; Yes SHE CAN – we can.