27th Session of the Working Group on the Right to Development

Item 4.4.1. The right to development and the duty to cooperate

(Geneva, 19 May 2026)

Remarks by Deputy Permanent Representative

Mr. Chair-Rapporteur,

My Delegation welcomes the convening of this interactive dialogue today on the right to development and the duty to cooperate. I thank you for the invitation to share Pakistan's perspective.

Pakistan shares the view that effective realization of the right to development requires, *inter alia,* an enabling international environment including international cooperation and solidarity in accordance with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and with full respect to international law.

The duty to cooperate with each other is neither a cliché nor a political slogan. It is deeply rooted in the UN Charter. It is central to multilateralism. The 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development, you may recall, affirmed that states have the duty to cooperate with each other in ensuring development and eliminating obstacles to development.

Yet for decades discussions on the right to development have remained trapped in ideological divisions and too often the declaration on the right to development has been treated as aspirational rather than operational.

It is time to move beyond that impasse toward practical convergences, the right to development should be viewed as reinforcing and not competing with any other human rights.

Mr. Chair-Rapporteur,

Today's complex multifaceted challenges such as poverty, conflicts, socioeconomic inequalities, climate change, forced displacement, pandemics, supply chain disruptions, illicit financial flows, digital divides and disruptions in global trade cannot be tackled effectively without international cooperation. These are global challenges requiring concerted, cooperative, and collaborative responses.

Even the most determined governments and strong national institutions cannot fully protect the rights of their people when external factors continue to intensify their challenges, when external conditions are not supportive of national capacities or when there are obstacles placed along the way.

Within the traditional human rights framework with states as duty-bearers and individuals as rights holders it is often assumed that violations originate within national borders and that remedies too must be found there. Yet modern realities expose the limits of that assumption.

For instance, what remedy exists for communities displaced by floods that are intensified by historical emissions of others? What protection is available to workers who lose livelihoods because of economic shocks generated far beyond their own borders? Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic made it plain that no state, no matter how powerful, could fully protect the rights of its people on its own.

Mr. Chair-Rapporteur,

Duty to cooperate for the right to development must translate into concrete actions among other things, address international problems of economic, social, cultural, political, environmental, health, educational, technological or humanitarian nature.

Must advance fairer access to development and climate finance, technology as well as debt sustainability, climate resilience and equitable, transparent and inclusive multilateral trading system. Promote the realization of sustainable development in SDGs leaving no one behind for socioeconomic progress and development for all and enhance representation and voice of developing countries and decision making in international institutions.

The duty to cooperate for operationalization of the right to development requires not just North-South cooperation but also South-South and triangular cooperation as a complement to North-South cooperation.

Operationalizing this duty also requires overcoming a long-standing limitation in international human rights discourse to treat issues such as inequities in the global financial architecture or climate change or the conduct of businesses as somehow outside the scope of human rights law. These issues often have direct and profound human rights consequences.

Mr. Chair,

Pakistan's own experience underscores why this discussion matters.

As a developing country with a large youthful population, Pakistan has made important strides in poverty reduction, education, healthcare, social protection and socioeconomic uplift of our people.

Yet our national efforts have often faced setback as a result of, for example, negative impacts of climate change including climate-induced floods, long-standing disputes in the region, geopolitical conflicts that often undermine energy and food security and because of other external economic shocks.

The devastating floods of 2022 in the country illustrated this reality with clarity. Those floods were the consequence of a wider climate crisis driven disproportionately by historical emissions from industrialized economies. Millions of Pakistanis saw their rights to life, housing, health and food directly affected.

The duty to cooperate is no less important at the regional level. Unilateralism, coercion and disregard of international norms and mutually agreed legal obligations including those related to transboundary waters not only impedes the realization of the right to development but also threatens peace, prosperity, economic development and progress of the peoples of the region as a whole.

Mr. Chair-Rapporteur,

The right to development is not just an aspiration but an inalienable human right. The duty to cooperate is a vehicle to realize not only the right to development but all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural including the right to peace and the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Crucially, the tools to operationalize this region are already within reach.

In this regard, we underscore the importance of ongoing efforts towards an international covenant on the right to development. The preparation of the draft by the Working Group and its subsequent transmission to the General Assembly marked a significant milestone in moving forward towards effective realization of this right.

A legally binding covenant would not replace the 1986 declaration, rather it would strengthen it and complement the core human rights treaties with clear obligations on states including the duty to cooperate and concrete mechanisms for implementation.

Pakistan has consistently supported the right to development as a foundational principle of international human rights.

Pakistan has advocated for strengthening the normative framework around this right, highlighted the disproportionate impact of debt burdens and unequal financial structures on developing countries and has underscored the necessity of binding international commitments to ensure meaningful realization of development rights.

Pakistan's position reflects the lived realities of many developing nations confronting inter alia climate vulnerabilities, fiscal constraints and development gaps despite limited historical responsibilities for global inequities.

As we confront widening inequalities and multiple global crises, the question before us is not whether the duty to cooperate exists in international law.

What it does, what is needed is more political will to operationalize it in support of the right to development.

I thank you.

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