

**Sixth session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals  
Human Rights, the Right to Development and Global Governance**

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**Human Rights, Necessary for the Achievement of Sustainable Development**  
Adapted from “Human Rights for All – Post 2015” Statement

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Thank you.

I'd like to begin by saying that the human rights movement has lost a stalwart. Nelson Mandela committed his life to creating a world in which we could all live free of fear and free of want. The OWG is well positioned to build on his legacy and contribute to his vision.

My name is Savi Bisnath and I am the associate director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University.

I am also speaking today on behalf of a group of human rights and social justice organizations worldwide from this statement, which has been endorsed by over 300 networks and organizations.

To be truly sustainable, development goals and their related policies must be anchored in human rights. Such goals and policies will move us from a model of charity to one of justice, based on the inherent dignity of people as human rights-holders, domestic governments as primary duty-bearers, and with all development actors sharing common but differentiated responsibilities.

A development framework founded in human rights can serve as an instrument for people and countries to help take apart the structural obstacles to sustainable, inclusive and just development, prevent conflict, build peace, and stimulate the realization of all human rights—civil, economic, political, social and cultural, as well as the right to development.

To accomplish this, a development framework must, at the very least, respect and reflect existing human rights legal norms, standards and political commitments. More specifically, International human rights, environmental and humanitarian law, the Millennium Declaration, related international consensus documents agreed in Rio, Vienna, Cairo, Beijing, Monterrey and Copenhagen and their follow-up agreements must form its non-negotiable normative base.

What would a sustainable development framework which is anchored in human rights look like?

It would uphold all human rights for everyone, especially the most marginalized and vulnerable, in all countries. Along with economic, social, cultural and environmental rights, it would include commitments to protect freedom of association, expression, assembly and political participation. As such it would serve to ensure an enabling environment for an empowered civil society, and it would protect human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders.

It would: Stimulate transparency and participation in decision-making at all levels, including in budgetary policies. Access to information and meaningful and effective participation are also critical to developing, implementing, and monitoring an effective and responsive sustainable development framework. This would entail using human rights criteria to monitor both the policy and budgetary efforts of governments, alongside development outcomes. The

aspirations being discussed by the OWG will surely fail if proper citizen-led systems of monitoring and accountability to human rights are not built into the very DNA of the framework, with clear and time-bound commitments by all relevant actors.

It would be: backed by national mechanisms of accountability, such as judiciaries, parliaments and national human rights institutions, and reinforced by regional and international human rights mechanisms, including the treaty bodies and the Universal Periodic Review mechanism.

It would also: Integrate meaningful institutions and systems to ensure human rights accountability of all development actors.

It would: Eliminate all forms of discrimination and diminish inequalities.

It would: Specifically and comprehensively support women's rights and gender equality: ensuring women's rights to, and control over, land, property and productive resources, social protection, and the equal distribution of paid and unpaid work, recognizing the care economy, eradicating gender-based violence, ending impunity, guaranteeing sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as the right to participation in decision-making to enable full and active participation in economic, political and social life throughout the life cycle .

And it would: tackle structural drivers of inequality, poverty and ecological devastation.

Human rights can only be realized if we also reduce inequalities of wealth, power and resources. Protecting decent work and diminishing unfair wage disparities are fundamental to reducing socio-economic inequality, as is reforming fiscal policies and promoting alternatives to austerity that do not erode human rights gains.

It would: Enable excluded groups and those who are disadvantaged and commonly discriminated against to be effective agents of development by drawing on the provisions of human rights standards aimed at eliminating discrimination on grounds such as race, gender, disability, migrant or indigenous status, age, language, sexual orientation, religion, and political or other opinion. These, and issues of intersectionality, require that goals be broad, with integrated targets and indicators across sectors.

The timely collection and disaggregation of data on the basis of various grounds of compound discrimination is essential to identify, make visible and respond to inequalities and violations of human rights, as well as increase accountability. At a national level, data should be collected and disaggregated based on country-relevant factors as defined by rights-holders. Global goals with meaningful national targets can increase country ownership and chances of success.

Let us honor Nelson Mandela's legacy by ensuring that we anchor the post 2015 agenda with its goals and related policies in human rights.

Thank you