

Messages to the High Level Political Forum

Statement by Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

16 July 2019

Madam President,

Distinguished Ministers and delegates,

Colleagues and friends,

The 2030 Agenda is a once in a lifetime opportunity to bring human rights – and hope – to millions of people who today are left behind.

As the Deputy Secretary General Amina Mohammed has said, “Human rights are an intrinsic part of sustainable development – and sustainable development is a powerful vehicle for the realization of all human rights.”

We will not reduce inequalities unless we can all raise our voices to call for policies that effectively address our rights to decent work, food, health, housing, education and justice. We will not ensure sustainable development unless we eradicate the discrimination, which strips millions of women and men of opportunities, resources and access to skills and to justice. We will not achieve effective climate action until we all participate in the definition and implementation of appropriate climate policies.

Human rights span economic, social, cultural, political and civil rights, as well as the right to development. They are not only universal, and inalienable; they are interdependent, and indivisible. And together, they are integral to every one of the 17 goals for sustainable development.

Achieving SDG 10, Reduced inequalities, is fundamentally a struggle to promote human rights. The same is true of SDG 4: Quality education; SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth; and SDG 13: Climate action.

The High Level Political Forum will also address SDG 17, on partnerships, and I want to linger on this point for a moment. Because human rights are not just the job of my Office. It is everyone’s job, too.

We can only ensure sustainable development if we can work together to ensure greater equality and human dignity – and when we empower the greatest possible participation by people in decisions that affect them. This approach is, to me, the meaning of SDG17.

Excellencies,

Recognizing the need to strengthen the partnerships between actors for human rights and sustainable development, the Human Rights Council held an Intersessional Meeting for Dialogue and Cooperation on Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development earlier this year. Its discussions were convened under the same overarching topic as this Forum – empowerment, inclusion and equality.

The Council meeting was an opportunity for Member States, UN representatives, National Human Rights Institutions, civil society, businesses and academics to share good practices, achievements, challenges and lessons learned.

They emphasised that implementing the SDGs requires a human rights-based approach – locally, nationally, regionally and globally.

Data collection, disaggregation and analysis are very important for the implementation of the SDG's and Human Rights, particularly for ensuring that the challenges faced by the most vulnerable and marginalized groups are clearly identified or addressed. If we are not counted we do not count.

Above all, participants highlighted the importance of drawing on the experiences of those who are left behind, in order to learn what works and what does not, for those who must be the primary beneficiaries of development.

States – who have the primary responsibility for achieving the 2030 Agenda – and all other actors must give space, including at the local and grass-roots level, to women, people from marginalised communities, young people, and all others, so that they can become active participants in defining policy and programmes. We need to establish more inclusive and collaborative roles for civil society, as well as the business community, in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda – even, and perhaps especially, where civil society voices do not agree with existing policy.

Many recommendations were made to help us establish more effective partnerships between New York – the traditional development hub – and Geneva, where our international human rights bodies are headquartered. I believe this is vital. Implementation of the SDGs is lagging. We must unlock accelerated action towards development that is sustainable, because it is inclusive – development which truly leaves no one behind.

My Office will continue to strongly support Member States in their efforts to implement the SDGs. We will continue to explore ways to promote the synergies between development and human rights, with a view to assisting all relevant actors to end the inequalities, discrimination, impunity and exclusion, which drive poverty, grievances and conflict.

I also encourage States and other actors to attend the second Human Rights Council intersessional meeting on this issue, which will take place later this year.

We will only achieve the Goals when we work in partnership. I count on this Forum to inspire us all to work together, so that we can build on each others' expertise to fulfill our promise to the people of the world, of a life in dignity for all.

Thank you