

Remarks by President António Costa at the High Level meeting to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development

Forty years ago, we affirmed a simple but powerful idea: development is not just about economic growth. It is about the rights, dignity and freedom of all persons and their ability to shape their own future.

The Declaration on the Right to Development highlights that everyone is entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy development. It established the right to development as inseparable from the full respect of all human rights.

Sustainable development, democracy, good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights all reinforce each other and demand the same emphasis, treated fairly and on an equal footing.

Today, these principles remain as relevant as ever. Around the world, an increasing number of people are affected by poverty and food insecurity. Inequality is growing. Climate change continues to affect lives and livelihoods. Violent conflicts are driving displacement and instability.

We also hear concerns about deeply rooted inequalities that affect our international system, reflected in unequal access to finance, technology or trade. If we are serious about the right to development, we must also be serious about building a more just, more inclusive and more effective multilateral system.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development remains our shared roadmap in this regard. We urgently call on the whole UN membership to maintain its focus on realising the Sustainable Development Goals.

We also reaffirm our commitment to the Seville Commitment, which renews the global framework for development financing in support of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The first Voluntary Review of the European Union on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda demonstrates our ongoing engagement with sustainable development, both at home and abroad.

Together with the member states, the European Union is the world's largest provider of development assistance, accounting for almost half of it globally in 2025.

Through the Global Gateway strategy, the European Union promotes public and private sustainable investment, boosting smart, clean and secure links in areas like digital, energy and transport, while also strengthening health, education and research. In four years, we have mobilised more than €306 billion in Global Gateway projects in partner countries, in a wide range of areas.

Development is also about voice, participation and justice. No country can achieve sustainable development if half of its population is held back. That is why gender equality is an essential prerequisite for sustainable development.

At a time when the United Nations and the wider multilateral system are under significant stress, the European Union remains committed to advancing the Right to Development through partnerships, cooperation, and investment in people, institutions, and democratic values.

We will continue to engage constructively, transparently and inclusively to ensure that the right to development advances together with the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights.

Thank you.

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