



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

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## **Putting human rights at the heart of development**

Side event on "Rights-Based Approach – a contribution for the post 2015", UNGA Ministerial Week

**New York, 24 September 2014**

Ambassador, Special Representative, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be here today to discuss with you on the importance of putting human rights at the heart of development.

In just over a year from now, the United Nations General Assembly will be asked to agree on a new framework for sustainable development; one which helps us respond to the profound changes in the global context we've seen over recent years and deliver effectively on the challenges of poverty eradication and sustainable development.

The EU believes that the new framework must be a rights-based and people-centred one. The EU position adopted last year make it clear that equality, justice, human rights and non-discrimination must be a pillar of the next post 2015 framework, just as the respect of basic standards, sustainable growth, management of natural resources and peace and security.

The good news is that we are not the only one.

The UN General Assembly's Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals has recently set out a report stating that "people are at the centre of sustainable development" and that we should "strive for a world that is just, equitable and inclusive".

At the recent Small Islands and Developing States Summit which just took place in the Pacific, similar calls were made in favour of the inclusion of human rights and democracy in the post 2015 agenda.

This is simply the right thing to do. Because there won't be any long lasting development as long as people are deprived of their fundamental rights.

Human Rights violations are both a cause and an effect of poverty and conflict. Poverty or conflict are exacerbated when human rights are denied; when people cannot access public and social goods and services, when they cannot exert political choices or their physical security and wellbeing is at risk. This was one of the lessons we learnt from the Arab Spring which shook a number of countries two years ago.

The EU wants to be an agent of change on the ground. Our "Agenda for Change" makes human rights, democracy, the rule of law and good governance coupled with inclusive and sustainable growth the two basic and mutually reinforcing pillars of the EU's development policy.

We also make full use of the instruments at our disposal to promote a rights based approach: thanks to the European Instrument for Human rights and Democracy, more than 2500 projects have been supported in 130 countries.

Thanks to the Cotonou agreement, all concerns related to the respect of human rights and the rule of law are discussed in a political dialogue with our partner countries.

We have also worked to translate those principles into concrete results on the ground. We have developed a guidance document - a so-called toolbox- presenting best practices on how to integrate a rights-based approach into the design of development projects and programmes we manage.

However, change does not happen overnight. And the Rights Based Approach implies a culture of change.

We have started to implement it with a number of partners. In Peru, for example, a major group of donors, including the EU, has adopted local guidelines to apply a Rights-Based Approach to development aid with the endorsement of the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights. It helped to reinforce traditional capacity building programme and to enhance access to justice.

This joint cooperation is critical to us: it shows that a Rights Based Approach is not about conditionality but about the effectiveness and impact of our policies and programmes: an objective which is shared by our partners.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The ongoing discussions on the Post-2015 Development Agenda offer an excellent opportunity to embed a rights-based approach into the next global sustainable development framework.

We must seize this chance and strive to make sure that human rights, equality, and the rule of law are fully integrated in the next agenda.

I hope this side event will help provide all of us with even stronger arguments and determination in this respect.

Thank you.