



Briefing on economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development

28 January 2026, 11h | Palais des Nations, Geneva
Room Concordia 1

Organized by the Permanent Mission of Portugal

Welcome remarks:

H.E. João Mira Gomes, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the UN and Other International Organizations in Geneva

Speakers:

Ms. Virgínia Brás Gomes, Former Senior Social Policy Adviser at the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security of Portugal and Former Chair of the UN Committee on ESCR

Mr. Surya Deva, Special Rapporteur on the right to development

Mr. Pradeep Wagle, Chief of the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Section, OHCHR

Ms. Sandra Ratjen, International Commission of Jurists

Open Debate:

Q&A and discussion

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PERMANENT MISSION OF PORTUGAL
GENEVA

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CONCEPT

In 2011, the **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR)** emphasized “the close relationship and the complementarity” between the **Covenant on ESCR and the Declaration on the Right to Development (R2D)** and pointed out that, by monitoring the implementation of the rights contained in the Covenant, the Committee contributes “simultaneously to the full realization of relevant elements of the right to development.” Today, this affirmation is more relevant than ever given the setbacks in the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR) in a world of persistent inequalities.

This briefing aims at, on the one hand, discussing **the contribution of the realization of ESCR to the fulfilment of the R2D**, on the basis of the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights. The realization of ESCR and the R2D, as well as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda are mutually reinforcing. Understanding this fundamental relation is pivotal to combating all forms of discrimination, promoting social justice, eliminating inequalities and leaving no one behind.

On the other hand, this briefing intends to shed light on **key components of the R2D** as a distinct right, enshrined in the **Declaration on the Right to Development** – whose 40th anniversary will be celebrated in 2026. In 1993, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action reaffirmed the R2D as “a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights”. However, since then, there have been challenges to implementation and lack of clarity on the nature of the R2D and of States’ obligations.

The individual and collective dimensions of the R2D; the difference between the R2D and a human rights-based approach to development; the relationship between R2D and sustainable development; the participation of rights holders and accountability of States as duty bearers; and the role of international cooperation – these are some of the areas this briefing will address.