



Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran
to the United Nations Office and
other International Organizations in Geneva

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Opening Remarks and Statement

by

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before

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Agenda item: HRC63 Side Event

**"The Impact of Armed Conflict on the Realization of the Right to Development
Protecting Critical Infrastructure and Preserving Development Gains"**

Geneva, 8 September 2026

Excellencies,

Distinguished panellists,

Dear colleagues and friends,

Good afternoon, and welcome.

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to this side event on **"The Impact of Armed Conflict on the Realization of the Right to Development: Protecting Critical Infrastructure and Preserving Development Gains."**

Let me begin by sincerely thanking our distinguished panellists for accepting our invitation, and all of you for joining us today.

We have convened this discussion around a simple but important proposition:

War is not only a humanitarian and security crisis. It is also a development crisis.

When a hospital is destroyed, the loss is not limited to a building. Health capacity, public investment, professional expertise and access to care are affected.

When a school or university is destroyed, the consequences extend beyond the day of the attack. They affect education, opportunity and the prospects of an entire generation.

And when water, energy, transportation or productive infrastructure is damaged, the effects can reverberate across an entire society.

Armed conflict can therefore destroy in days what societies have spent decades building.

This is why we believe that armed conflict must also be examined through the lens of the **right to development**.

Today, we are privileged to bring together different but complementary perspectives on this question.

It is my pleasure to welcome:

Mr. Surya Deva, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development;

Ms. Zaina Jallad, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights;

Mr. George Katrougalos, United Nations Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order;

Mr. Marco Sassòli, Honorary Professor of International Law at the University of Geneva and Member of the Executive Committee of the International Commission of Jurists;

Mr. Carlos María Correa, Executive Director of the South Centre;

and **Mr. Hassan Fartousi**, Secretary-General of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO.

We are grateful to have such a diverse range of expertise represented here today.

Before turning to our distinguished panellists, allow me to offer a few reflections.

The starting point is that **development is much more than economic growth**.

The right to development concerns the ability of individuals and peoples to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development.

This has an important implication for our discussion.

If development depends upon functioning institutions, education, health, water, energy, housing, transportation and productive capacity, then the destruction of these foundations is not merely incidental to conflict.

It is the destruction of development capacity itself.

And this destruction occurs at several levels.

There is the immediate physical damage.

There are then the **cascading and reverberating effects**. Damage to electricity can affect hospitals, water systems, communications and production. Damage to transportation can affect access to food, medicine, schools, employment and markets.

And finally, there is long-term developmental regression.

Resources intended for education, health, social protection and development must instead be redirected towards emergency response and reconstruction.

Armed conflict can therefore reverse development gains accumulated over decades and create structural obstacles to the enjoyment of human rights and the realization of the right to development.

The question is not only:

What has been destroyed?

It is also: **What development has been lost, for whom, and for how long?**

This brings us to another dimension: **future generations**.

War does not affect only those who experience it today.

A child deprived of education, a community deprived of health infrastructure, or an economy deprived of productive capacity may continue to bear those consequences long after hostilities have ended.

The recent report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development rightly identifies **intergenerational equity** as an overarching principle of the right to development and recognizes that conflicts affect the interests and rights of both present and future generations.

Protecting development gains during armed conflict must therefore also be understood

as a responsibility towards future generations.

For my country, Iran, these questions are not theoretical.

The recent military aggression against Iran demonstrated how quickly armed force can affect the institutions and infrastructure upon which civilian life and development depend.

I would like to express our appreciation to the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development for reflecting these consequences in his recent report to the General Assembly.

The report records that, according to information submitted by Iran, by April 2026, **857 schools and educational centres had been destroyed or severely damaged; 323 pharmaceutical, medical and emergency facilities had been damaged, including 12 hospitals rendered completely inoperative; 206 agricultural, livestock and poultry units had been destroyed; and 131 historical sites and 50 museums had been damaged.**

It also refers to the missile attack on the **Shahid Shajareh Tayyebah Primary School in Minab**, resulting in the deaths of more than **168 schoolchildren**.

Behind each of these figures lies a human and developmental reality.

A school represents not only walls and classrooms, but education and the future of children.

A hospital represents not only infrastructure, but the capacity of a society to protect life.

And cultural heritage represents not only physical sites, but identity, history and the transmission of culture between generations.

This brings me to perhaps the broader question before us:

Should the international community simply reconstruct development after every war — or should we also protect development from war in the first place?

The Special Rapporteur's report proposes a transition from a **war economy to a peace economy**, based on four interrelated components: foundational, preventive, institutional and deterrent.

This framework deserves serious attention.

The report notes that global military expenditure reached approximately **2.9 trillion US**

dollars in 2025.

At a time when enormous resources are still required to address poverty, hunger, water insecurity, climate change and development gaps, this raises a fundamental question: **What kind of security are we investing in?**

Security cannot ultimately be measured only by military capacity.

A society without access to health, education, water, food security, economic opportunity and human dignity cannot be genuinely secure.

There is one further dimension.

Conflict does not end, in developmental terms, when military operations cease.

Recovery requires finance, technology, equipment, medicines, reconstruction materials, trade and investment.

When conflict-affected societies simultaneously face **unilateral coercive measures, secondary sanctions and related over-compliance**, their capacity to recover and rebuild may be further constrained.

In conflict-affected and post-conflict settings, these restrictions may create additional obstacles to the restoration of essential services and development capacities.

The international environment should **facilitate recovery, not obstruct it**.

Indeed, the Special Rapporteur's report observes that unilateral coercive measures, when selectively used for political purposes, can undermine the ability of targeted countries to fulfil the basic human conditions necessary for peace.

Distinguished colleagues,

I would therefore suggest that we need a more systematic **development-sensitive approach to armed conflict — before, during and after conflict**.

Before conflict, development, diplomacy, international cooperation and the reduction of structural inequalities should be understood as part of prevention.

During conflict, international humanitarian law and international human rights law must protect civilian life and infrastructure, with greater attention to the long-term and reverberating developmental consequences of destruction.

And **after conflict**, reconstruction must be sustainable, inclusive and rights-based, while international cooperation should remove rather than reinforce obstacles to

recovery.

Accountability also matters.

When civilian infrastructure is destroyed, our assessment of harm should consider not only the immediate physical damage, but also the **development opportunities and capacities that have been lost.**

Let me conclude with one central message:

Peace and development are not two separate agendas.

Without peace, development gains accumulated over generations can disappear in days.

Without development, peace itself becomes fragile.

And without accountability and international cooperation, societies risk becoming trapped in cycles of conflict and underdevelopment.

Our task, therefore, is not merely to rebuild after destruction.

It is to build an international order in which the conditions necessary for development are themselves protected.

With these remarks, I am very pleased to turn to our distinguished panellists.

Thank you.