

CIVIL SOCIETY MEETING
Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond
Monday, 2 November 2020

Dialogue 1 – Reconnecting human rights & economic governance

Alejandra Scampini
PODER

I want to emphasize that the proposals and demands you will hear here today are not only economically sound and based on lived realities, but they also have a firm basis in international human rights law.

Rights require resources. The pandemic has made clear that people - and particularly women - cannot enjoy their rights including to food, clean water, social security, healthcare and education if governments do not have the fiscal space to spend on these things. For example, if the IMF is pressuring them to cut spending, or if billions of dollars are being siphoned offshore through corporate tax avoidance, or if they are spending more on debt servicing than they can on healthcare.

Human rights standards must guide economic and financing decisions. They oblige governments to raise and spend money in ways that are most likely to tackle inequalities and realize economic and social rights. And crucially, governments must cooperate internationally to protect, respect and fulfil the rights of people everywhere. Their duties do not stop at their own borders. We are calling for bold global solutions and a broad agenda of international fiscal cooperation anchored in the extra-territorial human rights obligations of all governments, particularly those with greatest resources. We also need a robust legally binding instrument on transnational corporations and other business enterprises, and we urge all States to meaningfully engage in this process to stop corporate impunity, and expand access to justice for affected communities. We must end the era of corporate capture of the State and restore the primacy of human rights over abusive trade and investment agreements and the corporate profit imperative.

Governments' human rights obligations should compel them to take action on the proposals you hear today - such as debt cancellation, a debt workout mechanism, and a democratic overhaul of the global tax architecture premised on economic, gender and ecological justice. We must end the pretense that human rights is something that "happens in Geneva", divorced from the FFD process. For instance, the Special Rapporteurs appointed by the Human Rights Council already have a host of concrete inputs that could help guide financing decisions in the more constructive, rights-respecting direction that people and planet so badly need. So, we urge you to heed the guidance of the many human rights experts in the UN system, and move away from multistakeholderism to a true multilateralism.