

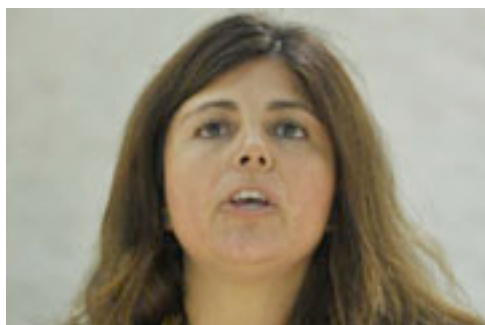


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Global recovery must start with the poor – UN human rights expert



Independent Expert on human rights and extreme poverty Magdalena Sepúlveda

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Unjustified cuts in aid to the poor during a financial crisis could violate human rights standards, and economic recovery must start with the most vulnerable, according to a United Nations human rights expert.

Magdalena Sepúlveda, the UN Independent Expert on human rights and extreme poverty, [told](#) a Human Rights Council meeting in Geneva that “unjustified reductions in expenditures devoted to implementing public services that are critical to the realization of economic, social and cultural rights will be in violation of human rights standards.

“There is no space in human rights for a trickle-down approach,” she said on Monday. “From a human rights perspective, recovery must start with the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.”

“Human rights are not expendable during times of crises and recovery. Even when resources are limited, States are legally bound to respect, protect and fulfil international human rights obligations,” Ms. Sepúlveda said. “The challenge of recovering from the global economic and financial crises is an opportunity to embrace a vision for the future aimed at the full realization of human rights.”

The independent expert said that several recovery measures adopted by States in the aftermath of the crises seriously jeopardize the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights by the poorest and most vulnerable groups.

“Austerity measures such as cuts to social protection systems, regressive taxation measures, and elimination of food subsidies are proving detrimental to the poorest of the poor, exacerbating their already precarious situation,” Ms. Sepúlveda said.

Increasing inequalities and food insecurity, the declining availability of natural resources and unpredictable changes to climate patterns are likely to increase the potential for social unrest throughout the world, she said.

“Any recovery plan must anticipate these challenges and assume that there will be many more crises to recover from,” she said. “Only human rights-based change can directly address the long-term structural barriers to equality and set the foundations for a sustainable, socially inclusive society.”

Ms. Sepúlveda urged States to view the challenge of recovery as a unique opportunity to aim towards the full realization of all economic, social and cultural rights for all individuals.

“Through a human rights-based recovery, States have the chance to embrace new and ambitious approaches to reducing inequality, eliminating poverty and creating stable societies that will withstand future shocks.”

The expert’s report outlines a number of innovative measures to which States should lend serious consideration when formulating their economic recovery, including implementing a comprehensive social protection floor, adopting socially responsible taxation policies, and enhancing regulation that protects individuals from abuse.

Ms Sepúlveda, who serves in an unpaid and independent capacity, reports to the Human Rights Council. She has been in the current post since May 2008.

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