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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority theme: strategies for the eradication of poverty to
achieve sustainable development for all**

Statement submitted by Franciscans International, International Movement ATD Fourth World, Passionists International, and VIVAT International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution [1996/31](#).

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

A universal rights-based approach to poverty eradication

As recognized by the UN Human Rights Council when it adopted the Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights in 2012, there are different levels of poverty. While poverty remains the main reason, and consequence, for social, economic, and cultural exclusion, the situation of those who suffer the greatest deprivations, who live in extreme poverty, has continuously been overlooked by national and international policy makers both in the global North and the global South. Extreme poverty is not only the result of lack of income, but is both the cause and the consequence of multiple human rights violations – the rights to health, to education, to decent housing, and to access safe livelihood opportunities. Human rights violations, related to certain economic and financial policies, often leads to further marginalization and exclusion. Extreme poverty therefore leads to regular denials of people's dignity and their human rights.

No development without human rights

For decades, the basis for supporting people living in poverty and extreme poverty has been a simple compensation for the deprivation of livelihoods. While some results have been demonstrated, this approach has never been sufficient nor comprehensive, and people in extreme poverty continue to be affected by the vicious cycle of ongoing human rights violations transmitted from one generation to another.

Discrimination and stigmatization faced by those living in extreme poverty not only lead to a violation of their civil and political rights, but also hamper their access to basic services needed to achieve a decent life and to enjoy economic, social and cultural rights. Implementing anti-poverty programs without ensuring the respect of their rights keeps these communities in a vulnerable situation prone to a return to poverty at any moment.

As a result, improving norms and mechanisms, at national and international levels, helps to prevent abuses by the private sector, and to ensure accountability and redress when these abuses occur. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will not be met unless they are implemented in keeping with human rights obligations.

Generating knowledge on multidimensional poverty with those left behind

Too many development projects have not reached their objectives because they did not correspond to the real needs and aspirations of the groups they targeted. For this reason, the experiences and knowledge of those who experience extreme poverty daily must be drawn upon to develop strategies that will effectively reach them, and build on the initiatives that they are already taking to improve their lives.

In both developed and developing countries, some communities are so isolated, excluded, and impoverished that they not only live in material deprivation but also lack political voice and social support structures. Participatory research initiatives can be launched to better grasp the knowledge and experience of the poorest and help them make their voices heard.

One such ongoing research has been launched by the International Movement ATD Fourth World and Oxford University who jointly set up a participatory research on the dimensions of poverty and how to measure them, where people in poverty are co-researchers in national research teams. The research is being implemented in six countries: Bangladesh, Bolivia, France, Great Britain, Tanzania

and the USA, and prioritizes the knowledge of people in poverty. Merging their insights with scientific understanding and the perspectives of practitioners and the general public, the research will be uniquely able to foster a common view as to the dimensions of poverty, and to provide enhanced answers and tools in informed development programming and policy-making.

While final conclusions are expected to be released in June 2019, many present findings already complement the Multidimensional Poverty Index used by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in very innovative ways. For example, France came up with new dimensions of poverty that are social and institutional maltreatment, Tanzania and Bangladesh with denial of human rights and environmental vulnerability, and all countries raised issues around the psychological effects of stigmatization.

The systemic marginalization of the most vulnerable communities should be tackled with locally and nationally-tailored policies that are inclusive and participative. National governments who receive assistance from the international community should ensure that their local authorities, civil society representatives, as well as people targeted by new policies, especially people living in extreme poverty, are consulted in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of any relevant social protection policy. Only in this way will development policies be truly transformative, and have increased chances of success.

A rights-based approach to social protection floors, a key strategy to eradicating poverty

Because the contemporary form of social welfare systems in developed countries were mainly conceived after World War II, and before human rights conventions were drafted, they sometimes lack essential linkages with the concept of universal rights at the foundation of all social protection floors, such as the right to non-discrimination, to participation, to protection and assistance for families, and to a standard of living, at the highest attainable standard of health and adequate housing.

Every member of society has the human right to social protection, which must translate into the establishment and maintenance of social protection floors as a fundamental element of national social security systems to ensure that everyone can enjoy their right to a decent standard of living.

As the concept of protecting at-risk or vulnerable citizens is rooted in the recognition of the equal moral worth of all members of society, the institution of social protection, including floors, is one of the clearest means of fulfilling the vision of eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development for all. In Haiti, ATD Fourth World has partnered with several organizations, such as the Service Œcuménique d'Entraide (SOE), to provide basic healthcare for 4,000 of the poorest residents of a slum district in Port-au-Prince that has been considered as "no go zone" by the UN and many NGOs. The provision of health coverage, costing \$12 per person per year, not only reduced maternal and infant mortality rates, but provided families with opportunities to join other educational and vocational projects.

Consequently, each country must tailor its social protection floors and complement traditional means of mutual assistance and solidarity while upholding their human rights obligations. Their design, implementation, and monitoring mechanisms must include the participation of trade unions, civil society and those living in extreme poverty.

Localization of SDGs and increased international monitoring

The localization of the SDGs, especially its first goal of “ending poverty in all its forms everywhere”, provides ownership to local authorities in finding durable solutions that are adapted to their context and limits the risks of people to slip back into poverty. It also opens a space for authorities, local civil society, and affected communities to provide feedback and effectively monitor the implementation of policies. Developing action plans to implement the SDGs at a local level would enable individuals to contribute more effectively to achieving the goals, to claim their rights, including their rights to access social protection floors, to oppose development projects that adversely affect their livelihoods, and to report violations to international monitoring mechanisms.

Consequently, while the High-Level Political Forum is the main platform to monitor the progress of States in the implementation of the SDGs, there is a blatant need for increased collaboration with other already-existing regional and international mechanisms, especially those related to human rights, as they also have essential insights and inputs in monitoring this progress from a rights-based perspective.

In a world where repressive responses to global problems seem to be on the rise, it is also our duty to flag the growing threats to human rights and their protection. In this view, it is important to note the growing role played by the private sector in influencing national policies, or in disregarding them with impunity. Whenever businesses are involved, as noted above, they should abide by the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. States must comply with their obligations to protect people against the negative impact of business activities on their rights and against further exclusion and marginalization.

Recommendations

We call on the Commission for Social Development to urge Member States:

- (a) To consider the adoption of a resolution around social protection systems, including floors, and poverty eradication, during its 56th session in February 2018 to implement relevant policies at the national level;
- (b) To encourage alliances between local authorities, CSOs, and people living in poverty in the design and implementation of policies to eradicate poverty;
- (c) To enforce the UN Guiding Principles on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty and ensure that all resolutions are in line with these Principles;
- (d) To encourage Member States to implement ILO Recommendation n° 202 at local, national and international levels;
- (e) To improve business accountability for human rights abuses at national and international levels, by ensuring implementation of UN instruments such as the international human rights treaties and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights; and
- (f) To enhance the monitoring and accountability tools through increased collaboration and synergies with other platforms such as the High-Level Political Forum and other regional and international human rights mechanisms.