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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: rethinking and strengthening social
development in the contemporary world**

Statement submitted by Restoration World Outreach Ministries, a non-governmental organization 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

I am honoured to deliver the following statement on behalf of Restoration World Outreach Ministries Inc. (RWOMI), an organization dedicated to the social development of all, and in particular, the most vulnerable and the poor among us.

We make this statement as the Commission concludes its two-year efforts to rethink and strengthen social development; and as the global community embarks on implementation of a second historic set of goals for all countries, developed and developing, to achieve sustainable development by 2030.

Our organization contributed to the social development agenda in various countries by hosting health fairs, community health education seminars, including on HIV and AIDs, providing food, clothing, medical supplies and medical screening in remote rural communities; provided ongoing support for elementary education, conducted women's empowerment sessions and supporting improvements in maternal health through provision of medical care, nutrition supplements, contraceptives, as well as counselling on family planning. Additionally, RWOMI delivered nutritional care to more than 62,000 homeless persons in Florida in the past four years, in an attempt to alleviate extreme hunger.

Through literacy and vocational training, RWOMI also worked to harness the initiative and skills of vulnerable individuals in fragile communities to help them break the cycle of poverty; and developed skills training programs to empower these individuals with alternative sources of incomes. By playing our part as a responsible member of the international community we have tried to make an impact, albeit a small one, in addressing some of the social ills of our society.

Fifteen years ago, world leaders in assessing the global landscape, agreed on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): a set of time-bound and quantified targets for addressing the many dimensions of extreme poverty, including hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion; while promoting gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability. When the MDGs were agreed, there was a general acknowledgement of the fact that social development is a key component of the sustainable development of the whole human race. It works in tandem with economic, political and other forms of development.

Regrettably, in the intervening years, uneven and unequal global development meant that although some progress was made, many countries, particularly developing ones, failed to meet some of the MDGs. Today, more than 1 billion people still live in extreme poverty. They continue to struggle with limited access to basic services, including education, health services, safe drinking water and sanitation. Rising inequality and exclusion, unemployment and lack of decent work opportunities also remain problems in many countries. These unattained, social dimensions of development comprise much of the "unfinished business" of the MDGs that led to the calls for a new global paradigm to succeed them.

Like others before us, RWOMI recalls the historic events of last September when world leaders agreed on a new framework of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be implemented by 2030. We were pleased that in charting a new course for humanity, a strong social development component was included in this ambitious SDGs agenda. We add our voice to the expressions of strong support for the comprehensive and far-reaching SDGs that the world community aspires to

attain over the next 15 years, in view of the potential for tremendous advancements in social development.

In assessing the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs, UN member states and other global actors have lauded the SDGs as people-centered, visionary, transformative, ambitious and far-reaching. However, we note that the 17 SDGs reflect immense challenges for achievement. Not least of which is the challenge of all countries acting effectively together to ensure that these are not mere goals but realities for all human beings. If, as was agreed last September, no one is to be left behind then collective action is required to ensure that the most vulnerable among us do not fall prey to continued marginalization, hunger and poverty. This means that as we seek to rethink and strengthen social development we must also rethink the ways in which we engage with each other given our shared responsibility.

Collective action by all members of the world community should reflect targeted interventions to ensure tangible/durable progress in addressing widening inequality, changing population dynamics, increased migration flows and climate change. We are capable of transforming our world take meaningful steps to galvanize action to eradicate poverty and end hunger.

For far too long, the world has been focusing on developing infrastructure, technology and science with relatively very little focus on the development of the human individual. If true development is to take place within any nation, then regardless of the advancements made in those areas, we need to focus our developmental efforts on the human resources — the human assets that are within each nation.

There needs to be a revamping of the education system to go beyond the sole focus on academic accomplishments and include the development of the skills and talents of individuals who are more inclined to the arts. Much of what people laugh at today may very well be the solution for tomorrow!

Indeed, people thought cosmetologists and hairdressers were persons who could not achieve academically and had no other choice. Today, the beauty industry which includes makeup artists (cosmetologists) and hair stylists (hairdressers) is a billion dollar industry. Furthermore, the music industry is without question booming today. Yet those with such skills often do not have the financial resources to pursue their dream and hone their talents.

That said, there needs to be investment in building music studios for all genres of music; more training colleges for beauticians, auto mechanics, and culinary students and so on.

In addition to this, more funding needs to be made available to train persons with disabilities, and encourage entrepreneurship at all levels. Furthermore, a plan should be made to identify and harness the skills and life experiences of older persons in order to facilitate knowledge and skills transfers so that there can be continuity.

As we rethink and strengthen global social development our approach to good health and wellbeing should include the removal of taxation from medical equipment and create greater incentives and benefits for doctors to service rural communities. Likewise, consideration should be given to removing taxes from solar

energy products if we are indeed committed to ensuring that there is affordable and clean energy globally.

In response to the increased pollution worldwide, our organization has a strong concern about the sustainability of clean water and proper sanitation, especially in rural communities where the poorest and most vulnerable persons live. There needs to be a drive to dig more wells and at an affordable cost, and removing taxes from tanks and generators.

Importantly, social and economic development cannot be achieved without a solution to the challenges of climate change. RWOMI is of the view that a holistic approach is required since individual choices, community choices, business choices and even the choices made by countries have an impact on such development since they are all directly linked to climate change.

In addressing the new global development priorities, RWOMI calls for the establishment of appropriate tools to measure and monitor development. Furthermore it is time for government to take ownership of man-made problems and implementing measures to mitigate and/or eliminate them.

If we are to indeed make progress in the fight against hunger and poverty, address the intractable problems in achieving gender equality, maintaining stable economic growth and full employment, governments and all other stakeholders must rise to the challenge and take ownership for the problems they have created regarding social development.

The seventeen SDG's represent an ambitious agenda. That ambition must now be matched by commitment and the capacity to deliver. Now is the time for genuine commitment! It is time for action! Now is the time for the world community to recognize that deeds must match words.

It is only through commitment to concrete action that we can make tangible contributions to social development and make the world a better place and ensure a sustainable future for all.
