



## **Economic and Social Council**

Distr.: General  
1 December 2015

Original: English

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### **Commission for Social Development**

#### **Fifty-fourth session**

3-12 February 2016

**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 Salesian Missions, Inc., 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

Salesian Missions, Inc., representing the Salesians of Don Bosco serves the young, especially the marginalized and those living in poverty, in over 130 countries.

We welcome the theme of the 54th Commission on Social Development: “Rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world” and address this theme promoting increased commitment to social inclusion and integration especially of refugees, migrants and the victims of trafficking.

### People First

People must be at the center of all social development. This means that a commitment to the common good and the advancement of all people must ensure the participation of all people. Additionally, all development processes must benefit all people and take into consideration the social interactions of groups and society. The human rights of people on the move, especially those forced to do so by conflict, lack of opportunities in their home societies or those trafficked for labour or sexual exploitation must be included for social development to benefit all.

For the creation of just, equitable and healthy societies we need the participation of all members regardless of economic status, gender, disability or migration status. In fact, the treatment of the most vulnerable and marginalized members of a society is a powerful indication of the values and priorities of leaders and the laws and regulations they will enact. Our common human dignity, our common humanity and the promotion and protection of the essential human rights of all peoples must motivate us in all decisions that have a direct impact on the most vulnerable populations. This is possible if we work to strengthen and promote the social integration of those considered to be outsiders or newcomers to a society, many of who are among the most vulnerable.

The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development (Commitment 4) states: “... the process of fostering societies that are stable, safe and just and that are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights, as well as on non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons.” Refugees, migrants and the victims of trafficking must be guaranteed participation if social development is going to be fostered in societies.

We acknowledge that while social integration, along with social inclusion, social cohesion and social capital are terms widely used in contemporary policy development to describe the elements necessary to form the societies envisioned in Copenhagen, they are difficult concepts to measure and operationalize. In the current context of “evidence-based policy making” their use has created challenges, but these are not insurmountable. They form the ethical basis for the activities and policies that can be more easily measured and quantified.

An inclusive society indicates that individuals strive to treat each other more justly and fairly in their daily lives, whether in the family, workplace, or in public spaces. Safe and peaceful neighbourhoods and communities improve social cohesion as people have a deeper sense of belonging and self-worth. People become willing to cooperate and work together to achieve common goals. Social integration

is demonstrated by levels of life satisfaction, engagement in the local civic community, trust and cultural participation.

#### Migrants and Trafficked Persons

Immigrant integration has been described as the process of economic mobility and social inclusion for newcomers and their children. It is dependent on institutions and mechanisms that promote development and growth within a society. Access to early childhood care, to all levels of education, to skills training for the workforce, to health care, to government services with appropriate language assistance all assist with the integration process. When communities are socially integrated successfully they have greater economic strength and their rich cultural diversity is celebrated, i.e. social development thrives.

Trafficked women, men and children are especially socially vulnerable. The exploitation and degraded quality of their lives, often lived in slavery-like conditions, are gross human rights violations. With their identity documents confiscated by traffickers they can be further victimized as undocumented migrants subject to legal sanctions. While the criminalization of trafficking victims is slowly being addressed and there is a shift in mind-set away from the view that trafficking is mostly a law enforcement issue, more needs to be done. We need to see trafficking as an economic and social issue, linked with other global trends including migration. Preventing the trafficking of persons means that national authorities examine the root causes of this crime along with an analysis of exploitation within a nation, whether in the sex industry, agriculture, domestic work, fishing, extractive industries, or the tourist industry. This change in focus allows us to see vulnerable exploited people as searching for a better life rather than as criminals. We begin to welcome them and seek to integrate them into a new way of life and society.

The European Union (2004) developed integration principles and guidelines that describe integration as a “two-way process of mutual accommodation” by immigrants and natives. These principles, when followed, lead to greater social development and cohesion. Integration entails respect for “basic values” of the host country; prioritizing education, employment, political participation, and equal access to institutions and to public and private benefits; requires knowledge of the host community’s language, history and institutions; stresses the need for “frequent interaction” between immigrants and natives; guarantees religious liberty and respect for rights; mainstreams integration concerns into all government agencies and into public policy formation and implementation; and demands regular evaluation and policy adjustment on clear goals, indicators and evaluation mechanisms.

#### Salesian Responses

The Salesians have worked with special emphasis on assisting young migrants and refugees in diverse settings. Some examples:

Helenenberg, Germany: Civil authorities in the Renania-Palatinato region recognized that young unaccompanied migrants needed to move out of their clandestine situation, gain basic social skills and be helped to make informed choices to secure a better future. If young migrants were assisted in fitting into German society in a responsible way, rather than criminalizing them, everyone would benefit. The Salesians partnered with the civil authorities to accomplish this

goal. The youngsters are given room and board, some for as long as three years. Classes are offered to help them learn or improve their German language skills. Guidance from teachers and welfare personnel helps them decide to explore their possibilities and ways of remaining in Germany or returning to their own country. While in Helenenberg they attend a trade skills course, begin to gain work experience, learn how to manage their finances and to be part of German society in a dignified way.

Thanjavur, India: The Salesians have opened both formal and informal educational centres with many focused on training youngsters for the world of work. An example of this commitment is seen in Don Bosco Higher Secondary School, Thanjavur, India. In June, 2012, 354 students graduated from their skill training course in the Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees Rehabilitation Program conducted there. The Salesians, with assistance from funding from the USA, have been preparing Sri Lankan Tamil refugees with professional skills in a variety of areas for the world of work.

Refugees: In the refugee camp at Kakuma, Kenya, the Salesians have provided an education to more than 66,000 young internees. Since the beginning of the conflict in Syria, Salesians in Lebanon have helped Syrian refugees, providing educational, recreational and spiritual opportunities and preparing them for participation in society.

#### Recommendations

To promote social integration and inclusion of vulnerable populations, and thus promote social development, we recommend that governments, civil society organizations and the private sector collaborate to ensure that:

- Policies to protect the rights of all migrants, and of all vulnerable people (foreigners or nationals) be enacted and enforced.
- Recognize victims of exploitation and/or trafficking, and grant them immediate access to legal counselling, healthcare, and tailored forms of assistance, to be able to claim their rights.
- Exploitation, wherever and whenever it takes place, especially when migrant workers are involved, be combatted and the driving factors of exploitation be addressed.
- International cooperation be enhanced to ensure that people entitled to international protection as they flee conflict and crisis areas are offered a viable solution in one of their preferred countries.
- Regular assessment of the social integration of all vulnerable populations and a commitment to creating just, safe and inclusive societies.