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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 the International Committee for Peace and Reconciliation, 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

Strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all

Poverty may be understood as a condition in which a person or community is lacking the basic need for minimum standard of wellbeing particularly as a result of persistent lack of income. A person can be pushed into that state of poverty by external circumstances. In that context, a person is an innocent victim of the situation. Poverty is a pronounced deprivation in wellbeing and has many manifestations which include hunger, malnutrition, inadequate access to education, unhealthy living conditions, inadequate physical security, lack of participation in social activities. A person who has to struggle all the time for physical survival cannot invest any additional time to achieve higher qualities of life. Poverty then becomes a function of diminished capability of people to live the kinds of life they aspire for.

The economic aspect of poverty focuses on material needs and can be put into three categories: extreme, moderate and relative. Absolute poverty refers to a condition which is consistent over time and among countries. The world bank defines extreme poverty as living on less than US \$1.25 per day per person. Moderate poverty is the state in which one can survive by meeting the basic need for the minimum standard of wellbeing but cannot meet the other aspects of life adequately. Relative poverty is viewed on social context and is a measure of economic distance between two individuals in a chosen domain. This is an indication of inequalities rather than material deprivation or hardship.

It is often argued that the world has enough resources to lift all women and men up from extreme poverty. Yet, extreme poverty persists. One oft quoted explanation is that there is no agreed upon mechanism to distribute resources to the deserving needy. Uncontrolled population growth is diminishing the resources by making poverty a fate accompli for many.

Luckily, there is an awareness in a section of people that the eradication of poverty is beneficial for all otherwise, poverty like a contagious disease will also bring the rich down. But if the poor remain silent and wait for the rich to call for justice they will have to wait and transmit their hope to the next generation and the poverty cycle will continue as Voltaire noted, "The comfort of the rich depends upon an abundant supply of the poor".

Even though poverty is a curse upon the human society its effect on the society is not always sex independent. Because of existing social structures, physical capabilities and mental aptitudes poverty affects men and women disproportionately.

Therefore, in the quest for finding how to reduce poverty the issue must be addressed in terms of men and women because of the women's unique and unequal position in the existing society.

One of the many causes of poverty is forced migration. Of the more than 50 million refugees, asylum-seekers, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) across the world, 80 percent are women and children. For IDPs the average length of displacement is seventeen years. Given these statistics, it is critical to listen to the priorities of women and girls affected by forced displacement and migration. Women's health issue is an important factor to fight against poverty. An unhealthy poor mother gives birth to an unhealthy poor baby, and if not taken care of at the beginning he/she will only be a part of the statistics of the poor people. Therefore,

the empowerment of women in the decision-making process to reduce is a very important component. Women must be included in all decision-making processes which affect the wellbeing of all members of the society. It is encouraging to note that women's empowerment is slowly getting recognized in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Microcredit and women's savings groups aim both to reduce income poverty and contribute to women's empowerment.

Yet, there is another side of the picture. Given the opportunities some poor people both men and women will not take advantage of all the available opportunities to reduce poverty with the expectation that other will take care of them. This type of self-inflicted poverty is a disease and if there is no immediate cure for this disease, affected people shall be put under quarantine so that disease cannot spread.

The poverty eradication program can only work if the poor can be motivated to play their due role. If a poor person in poverty ignores all the calls for liberation and is determined to live inside a prison of poverty she or he can never be liberated even if the walls of the prison are abolished. Only the poor and reach, men and women working together for their mutual benefit can send poverty in exile.
