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ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

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Russian Federation, Rwanda, San Marino*, Senegal, Slovakia*,
South Africa, Spain*, Sweden*, Ukraine*, Uruguay, Venezuela,
Yemen*: draft resolution

1999/... Human rights and extreme poverty

The Commission on Human Rights,

Recalling that, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights recognize that the ideal of free human beings enjoying freedom from fear and want can be achieved only if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his economic, social and cultural rights, as well as his civil and political rights,

Recalling in particular that article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including

* In accordance with rule 69, paragraph 3, of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council.

food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control,

Recalling also that the eradication of widespread poverty, including its most persistent forms, and the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights and civil and political rights remain interrelated goals,

Deeply concerned that, 51 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, extreme poverty continues to spread in all countries in the world, regardless of their economic, social and cultural situation, and that its extent and manifestations, such as hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, illiteracy and hopelessness are particularly severe in developing countries,

Bearing in mind the relevant provisions of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights (A/CONF.157/23),

Recalling in particular that the World Conference on Human Rights reaffirms that least developed countries committed to the process of democratization and economic reforms, many of which are in Africa, should be supported by the international community in order to succeed in their transition to democracy and economic development,

Recalling its resolution 1998/25 of 17 April 1998, in which it was decided, inter alia, to appoint for a period of two years, an independent expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty,

Noting that the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the follow-up of the World Conference on Human Rights (E/CN.4/1999/9) considers that the consequence of this decision will be not only to improve the information needed in the decision-making process of United Nations organs and institutions, but also to focus the attention of the international community on this fundamental question,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 50/107 of 20 December 1995, in which the Assembly proclaimed the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006), as well as its resolution 53/146 of 9 December 1998 on human rights and extreme poverty, in which it recalls that the mandate of the independent expert will be, inter alia, to continue to take into account the efforts of the poorest people themselves and the conditions in which they can convey their experiences,

Stressing that, in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, Governments committed themselves to endeavouring to ensure that all men and women, especially those living in poverty, could exercise the rights, utilize the resources and share the responsibilities that would enable them to lead satisfying lives and to contribute to the well-being of their families, their communities and humankind and committed themselves to the goal of eradicating poverty throughout the world through national actions and international cooperation, as an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind,

Recalling the report of the Secretary-General on women's real enjoyment of their human rights, in particular those relating to the elimination of poverty, economic development and economic resources (E/CN.4/1998/22/-E/CN.6/1998/11),

Noting with satisfaction the progress report submitted by the independent expert in accordance with resolution 1998/25 (E/CN.4/1999/48),

1. Reaffirms that:

(a) Extreme poverty and exclusion from society constitute a violation of human dignity and that urgent national and international action is therefore required to eliminate them;

(b) The right to life includes within it existence in human dignity with the minimum necessities of life;

(c) It is essential for States to foster participation by the poorest people in the decision-making process in the societies in which they live, in the realization of human rights and in efforts to combat extreme poverty and for people living in poverty and vulnerable groups to be empowered to organize themselves and to participate in all aspects of political, economic and social life, particularly the planning and implementation of policies that affect them, thus enabling them to become genuine partners in development;

(d) The existence of widespread absolute poverty inhibits the full and effective enjoyment of human rights and renders democracy and popular participation fragile;

(e) For peace and stability to endure, national action and international action and cooperation are required to promote a better life for all in larger freedom, a critical element of which is the eradication of poverty;

2. Recalls that:

(a) The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action provide the substantive framework for eradicating poverty by setting specific targets, drawing up plans and implementing programmes;

(b) To ensure the protection of the rights of all individuals, non-discrimination towards the poorest and the full exercise of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, a better understanding is needed of what is endured by people living in poverty, including women and children, and thought must be given to the subject, drawing on the experience and ideas of the poorest themselves and of those committed to working alongside them;

(c) In its resolution 1997/11, it requested the High Commissioner for Human Rights to give high priority to the question of human rights and extreme poverty, ensure better cooperation between the institutions and bodies involved, regularly inform the General Assembly of the evolution of the question and submit specific information on this question at events such as the evaluation of the World Conference on Human Rights planned for 1998, the special session of the General Assembly devoted to conclusions of the World Summit for Social Development, scheduled for 2000, and the evaluation, at the halfway point in 2002 and the end-point in 2007, of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty;

2. (bis) Welcomes the observations contained in the report submitted by the independent expert on extreme poverty (E/CN.4/1999/48), according to which the lack of political commitment, not financial resources, is the real obstacle to the eradication of poverty;

3. Notes with interest:

(a) That, in her report of 11 September 1998 (A/53/372) to the General Assembly on the mid-term evaluation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the High Commissioner for Human Rights proposes that the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly should work jointly to implement the right to development by focusing on the elimination of poverty, with particular emphasis placed on basic security, which is necessary to enable individuals and families to enjoy fundamental rights and assume basic responsibilities;

(b) That, on 16 October 1998, on the occasion of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, the first step towards joint work by the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly was taken in the form of the round table presided by the Chairmen of the two Committees on "Poverty,

human rights and development", the theme chosen by the General Assembly for 1998 in the context of the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty;

4. Calls upon:

(a) The General Assembly, specialized agencies, United Nations bodies and intergovernmental organizations to take into account the contradiction between the existence of situations of extreme poverty and exclusion from society, which must be overcome, and the duty to guarantee full enjoyment of human rights;

(b) States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to continue to take into account, in the activities to be undertaken within the framework of the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, the links between human rights and extreme poverty, as well as efforts to empower people living in poverty to participate in decision-making processes on policies that affect them;

(c) The United Nations to strengthen poverty eradication as a priority throughout the United Nations system;

5. Invites:

(a) The treaty bodies monitoring the application of human rights instruments, especially the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, to take into account, when considering the reports of States parties, the question of extreme poverty and human rights;

(b) The independent expert to continue her reflection, in accordance with her mandate, with a view, in particular:

To reporting on her activities to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-sixth session, underlining in particular the best practices observed during her visits and making this report available to the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women, as appropriate, for their sessions during the same year;

To contributing to the General Assembly's evaluation in 2000 of the World Summit for Social Development by making her final report and conclusions available to the preparatory committee for the special session of the

General Assembly devoted to that evaluation, taking into account, as requested by the General Assembly, the efforts of the poorest people themselves and the conditions in which they can convey their experiences;

6. Requests The High Commissioner for Human Rights to consider the possibility of holding a workshop with the independent expert and the experts from the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities in 1999 with a view to consultations also involving the relevant functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council on the main elements of a possible draft declaration on human rights and extreme poverty;

7. Decides to consider this question at its fifty-sixth session under the same agenda item.
