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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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Agenda item 10

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Albania\*, Algeria\*, Australia\*, Bangladesh, Belgium\*, Bhutan, Cameroon\*, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica\*, Côte d'Ivoire\*, Denmark\*, Ecuador, Egypt\*, Ethiopia\*, Finland\*, France, Germany, Ghana\*, Iceland\*, India, Iraq\*, Ireland\*, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malta\*, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Paraguay\*, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino\*, Senegal, Slovakia\*, South Africa\*, Spain, Sweden\*, Switzerland\*, Tunisia, Uruguay\*, Venezuela, Yemen\*: draft resolution

2000/... 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,

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

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 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, 52 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, extreme poverty continues to spread in all countries of 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 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), and the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the first Decade (A/54/316),

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 53/146 of 9 December 1998, on human rights and extreme poverty, in which the Assembly recalls that the mandate of the independent expert shall include to continue to take into account the efforts of the poorest people themselves and the conditions in which they can convey their experiences,

Welcoming the Declaration of the Microcredit Summit, held in Washington, D.C., in 1997, which launched a global campaign to reach 100 million of the world's poorest families, especially women, with credit for self-employment by the year 2005,

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 Commission resolution 1999/26 (E/CN.4/2000/52) and the recommendations contained therein,

1. Reaffirms:

(a) That 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) That the right to life includes within its existence in human dignity with the minimum necessities of life;

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

(e) That, 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;

(f) That, according to the observations contained in the reports submitted by the independent expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty (E/CN.4/1999/48 and E/CN.4/2000/52), the lack of political commitment, not financial resources, is the real obstacle to the eradication of poverty;

(g) That special attention must be given to the plight of women and children, who often bear the greatest burden of extreme poverty;

2. Recalls:

(a) That the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit on Social Development provide the substantive framework for eradicating poverty by setting specific targets, drawing up plans and implementing programmes;

(b) That, 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 that 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) That, in its resolution 1997/11 of 3 April 1997, it requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to give high priority to the question of human rights and extreme poverty, to ensure better cooperation between the institutions and bodies involved, regularly to inform the General Assembly of the evolution of the question and to submit specific information on this question at events such as 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 2000 and the end-point in 2007, of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty;

(d) That, in her report of 11 September 1998 to the General Assembly on the mid-term evaluation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (A/53/372, annex), the United Nations 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;

3. Welcomes the increasing number of events associated with the celebration, on 17 October of each year, of International Day for the Eradication of Poverty and the opportunity which these events provide to people and populations living in extreme poverty to make their voices heard;

4. Expresses its appreciation:

- (a) That an integrated approach is being followed by the United Nations system in addressing the question of extreme poverty;
- (b) That the international financial institutions have developed new policies strengthening the human and social dimension of their action;
- (c) For the initiatives taken in many countries by national education authorities to raise awareness among all children and young people of the existence of extreme poverty and the urgent need for united action to enable the poorest people to regain their rights;

5. 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;

6. 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) States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to submit to the Secretary-General, by the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on Human Rights, their views and comments on the recommendations contained in the report of the independent expert;
- (c) The Working Group on the Right to Development, in its deliberations, to take into account the report of the independent expert on human rights and extreme poverty;

7. Decides to renew, for a period of two years, the mandate of the independent expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty:

(a) To evaluate the relationship between the promotion and protection of human rights and the eradication of extreme poverty, including through the identification of national and international good practices;

(b) To hold consultations, including during her visits, with the poorest people and the communities in which they live, on means of developing their capacity to express their views and to organize themselves and to involve national human rights bodies in this exercise;

(c) To consider strategies to overcome extreme poverty and the social impact of those strategies;

(d) To continue her cooperation with the international financial institutions, with a view to identifying the best programmes for combating extreme poverty;

(e) To contribute to the mid-term evaluation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, scheduled for 2002;

(f) To report on her activities to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-seventh and fifty-eighth sessions and to make those reports available to the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women, as appropriate, for their sessions during the same years;

8. Requests:

(a) The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to organize, before the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on Human Rights, a seminar to consider the need to develop a draft declaration on extreme poverty and, if appropriate, to identify its specific points. In view of the need to take into account work undertaken elsewhere, an invitation to this seminar should be extended to government experts, the United Nations specialized agencies, the United Nations funds and programmes, the relevant functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, the regional economic commissions, the international financial institutions, the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and interested non-governmental organizations;

(b) The Secretary-General to support this initiative;

9. Decides to consider this question at its fifty-seventh session under the same agenda item;

10. Recommends the following draft decision to the Economic and Social Council:

“The Economic and Social Council, taking note of Commission on Human Rights resolution 2000/... of ... April 2000, endorses the Commission’s decision to renew, for a period of two years, the mandate of the independent expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty:

“(a) To evaluate the relationship between the promotion and protection of human rights and the eradication of extreme poverty, including through the identification of national and international good practices;

“(b) To hold consultations, including during her visits, with the poorest people and the communities in which they live, on means of developing their capacity to express their views and to organize themselves and to involve national human rights institutions in this exercise;

“(c) To consider strategies to overcome extreme poverty and the social impact of those strategies;

“(d) To continue her cooperation with the international financial institutions, with the view to identifying the best programmes for combating extreme poverty;

“(e) To contribute to the mid-term evaluation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, scheduled for 2002;

“(f) To report on her activities to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-seventh and fifty-eighth sessions and to make those reports available to the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women, as appropriate, for their sessions during the same years.”

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