



## **Economic and Social Council**

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### **Commission for Social Development**

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Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda\*

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and  
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:  
priority theme: poverty eradication**

### **Statement submitted by International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 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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\* E/CN.5/2011/1.

## **Statement\***

1. Poverty has many causes. They on occasion do include natural disasters like drought, as well as the horrendous earthquake in Haiti and floods in Pakistan this year. But for the most part human behaviour is the root cause of most poverty from the wasteful use of fertile lands and the seas, global warming and the disasters of war, and most especially policies which have led to ever-increasing inequality within and between societies. Indeed, most societies too willingly tolerate sources of poverty that are in their power to correct, such as the unequal treatment of women in general and indigenous peoples in particular. Social exclusion results from political choices.

2. Additionally, too often societies tolerate cumbersome and corrupt bureaucracies that limit the actual delivery of services allocated for the impoverished. Those living in extreme poverty and those made poor do not accept the inequity passively. They struggle to overcome poverty, but too often they are hampered by the ill-health of adults and of the children they must care for; by the lack of land rights and access to affordable credit and other needed financial services; by an inadequate or non-existent transportation infrastructure; and above all, by the absence of decent work.

## **Effective practice**

3. One of the many good practices with inclusive economic dynamism implemented by NGOs is narrated by the Chairperson of Clann Credo, Ireland (see [www.clanncredo.com](http://www.clanncredo.com)). Clann Credo is a social entrepreneur project which promotes the eradication of poverty by helping to resource community-based projects which foster the generation of employment and decent work for those who are impoverished.

4. In order for poverty to significantly decline, a vigorous and sustained economic growth with a marked increase in the generation of jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities is needed. Unlike the jobless growth of the decades leading up to the financial crisis in 2008, growth must be sustained by well-functioning public services, market oversight and a fair tax system to raise adequate revenue for necessary social as well as economic programmes. A healthier and better educated workforce is more easily absorbed into growing numbers of better paying and more productive jobs. Transforming a poor population into a “middle” class also creates a mass market for additional production of goods and services. Coupled with responsible care for the environment, high standards for workplace safety, and explicit social inclusion priorities, poverty can be overcome.

5. Beyond national policies, re-examining the approach to development on the international level is essential. Unfortunately the policies of the previous decades imposed on developing countries costly models of privatization and structural adjustment, commodity specialization and food insecurity, liberalization of capital flows, speculation leading to financial crises, and social expenditures sacrificed to fiscal constraint. The financial crisis of 2008 has highlighted two areas which require re-thinking.

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\* Issued without formal editing.

6. First, while the market is a powerful tool, it must be guided in the public interest — the “common good” and dignity of each human being — to deliver economic development and poverty eradication. Second, the market must be complemented by an effective provision of essential economic and social services that can keep pace with growth. To serve this end, Governments need to mobilize resources through a just system of taxes.

7. The involvement of those living in crushing poverty who are in fact the major stakeholders is essential to effective programmes to eradicate poverty. They should be an integral part of the designing, monitoring and evaluating of all policies. Too often they are relegated to being simply the “objects” of the charity of the donors. Those living in poverty must be recognized as the “subjects” who need to author their own lives.

8. Only a paradigm shift at national and international levels to complement anti-poverty amelioration with inclusive economic dynamism will eradicate poverty. Rather than focusing purely on economic growth, policymakers should fashion policies which would serve the basic human development of all people, especially the too often excluded sectors of the society at the “bottom”. A primary plank of poverty eradication policies must be the generation of decent work so that those in poverty can extricate themselves and their families.

9. The economic crisis has called into question old ways of thinking and old economic models have been exposed as fundamentally unsuited to promoting human development. The recent financial and economic crisis provides an opportunity to make fundamental changes — the kind of opportunity that has not been seen for generations.

10. The determined manner in which Governments have recently pumped many billions of dollars into rescue packages for their economies shows clearly that when the scale of emergency is understood, politicians can find the will to act. Political will need not be a permanent obstacle to tackling poverty.

11. However, changes in politics are not enough. There is a need for a more fundamental change of the dominant development paradigm. The current crises reflect a model of development that is blind to environmental and human rights issues and confuses economic growth with progress in society. The former model regarded combating poverty as primarily a technical challenge. It was not people-centred, and did not respond to the larger demands of social justice.

### **Recommendations**

12. Recommendations include:

- A comprehensive programme to tackle the global development crisis at its roots, mitigating its social impact and preventing future crises. Needed are effective regulations and reforms in the global economic and financial system;
- The Millennium Development Goals address the symptoms of poverty and underdevelopment, but ignore their deeper causes. A modified or alternative programme is needed to address the social and environmental failings of the current model of economic development;

- On the local and international levels, greater emphasis must be placed on the generation of decent work as the most effective way of enabling the impoverished to lift themselves out of poverty.

13. Most of the root causes of poverty are human actions; all of the above actions are means to eradicate poverty at its roots.

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*Note:* Statement also supported and endorsed by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council: Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Congregations of St. Joseph, Dominican Leadership Conference, International Federation of Women in Legal Careers, International Peace Research Association, Loretto Community, Passionists International, Sisters of Charity Federation, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, UNANIMA International, Vivat International (special consultative status).