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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: promoting empowerment of people
in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and
full employment and decent work for all**

Statement submitted by the Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, 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.



Statement

Millions of people around the globe aspire deeply to social integration, as well as to escape poverty through full employment and decent work. The whole world is aware of the growing unhappiness, protest and violence arising from growing inequalities not only in the poor countries, but also in the developed countries. Wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, and many are pushed into poverty and marginalization. This is not a sign of an inclusive global society. Poverty eradication requires multiple approaches and multiple partners focused specifically on policies that build a just and inclusive society. We, the Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, appreciate the efforts of the United Nations to address this issue and to seek solutions together as a global community.

Global inequality

The world population is estimated at over 7 billion, and of these the wealthiest 20 per cent account for 87 per cent of global income, while the poorest 20 per cent enjoy less than 1 per cent. The United Nations has classified 47 countries as least developed, meaning the poorest and weakest segment of the international community. Only 16 per cent of the population of least developed countries has access to electricity, compared with 53 per cent of the population of developing countries and 99 per cent of the population of countries members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Even in OECD countries, the average income of the richest 10 per cent is about nine times that of the poorest 10 per cent. While globalization has created greater monetary wealth, its distribution tends to be more unequal, both among countries of the world and within them. The political power of Governments to protect the poor and marginalized diminishes day by day as they are unduly influenced by the wealthy and greedy.

Consequences of inequality

Around the globe, from Cairo to New Delhi to New York, people are taking to the streets to express their anger over high unemployment, escalating food prices and widespread unfairness as well as their unwillingness to accept it any longer. We are living in a society facing turmoil and ecological disaster. People all over are demanding that Governments act, using their political pathways based on democracy, human rights and planetary solidarity.

The capitalist development model, in particular under the dominant neo-liberal policy regime, reduces development to growth in production and grants rights and liberties to capital over the rights and freedoms of people and the protection of the environment. The domination of the financial institutions and transnational companies of the advanced countries over the global economy, and intensified labour exploitation and resource extraction for unlimited profit, cause not only greater hunger, inequality, landlessness and forced migration, but also conflicts and wars.

In the twenty-first century, it is unacceptable to have 870 million hungry people and a mountain of unemployed. Every child who dies as a result of malnutrition and hunger, every person who turns to violence either towards self or towards society, is a loud voice crying out that society is not headed in the right direction. Natural calamities, such as Hurricane Sandy, are also indicators that it is

high time to change lifestyles and perspectives, particularly in the advanced countries.

Empowerment of people

Full and productive employment and decent work should be placed at the centre of social and economic policies. For example, the world's 500 million small farmers who are the backbone of food production are in need of empowerment, as many of them are living in poverty. Food security can never be achieved unless local farmers are supported. Women who are involved in farming are much more affected by food insecurity as a result of their lack of access to land, resources and market facilities.

Policies and procedures must be developed to control and stop land-grabbing and ocean-grabbing by transnational companies, which affect the livelihoods of millions of traditional fish workers and small farmers across the globe. Undue depletion of natural resources to achieve short-term goals can only exacerbate poverty and hunger. People who are vulnerable owing to age, disability or discrimination and victims of natural and human-made calamities need particular support and protection. Social protection for all should be made mandatory by all national and local government bodies.

Sovereign debt crisis

The recent special event entitled "Sovereign debt crises and restructurings: lessons learned and proposals for debt resolution mechanisms organized by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the Second Committee of the General Assembly, demonstrated the role of the United Nations in addressing the current economic issues. As Professor Kenneth Rogoff said, this time is definitely different in the history of humanity. The debate exposed the relationship between the financial and the political, as well as the "moral decay" in which the current system favours only the lenders. Given the weakness of the existing system, we need new efforts such as responsible lending and borrowing. Every hungry man, woman and child in the world is a victim of these unjust policies, and therefore it is crucial to change them.

Sustainable development goals and the development agenda beyond 2015

Among the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the establishment of a set of sustainable development goals and the development agenda beyond 2015 should serve as an impetus for Governments to address the aforementioned challenges. The process should include civil society's full participation towards measurable and targeted goals to ensure a sustainable future for all. We should learn from our past mistakes and adopt policies that can ensure inclusive and fair development that is sustainable.

Recommendations to Member States and the United Nations

- Develop policies to cancel the sovereign debt of the highly vulnerable countries in order to reinvest in social development.

- Ensure food security and food sovereignty through policies that support small farmers and women producers by securing for them access to land, water and other essentials.
- Provide social protection such as food aid to the most vulnerable: the elderly, the disabled and victims of natural and human-made calamities, as well as those living in situations of extreme poverty.
- Restrict the exploitation of natural resources by multinational extractive industries and prevent the overexploitation of fisheries and agricultural lands by large corporations by changing international policies, particularly energy policies. Adopt rigorous and binding reporting rules.
- Develop mechanisms to regulate international and national financial institutions, including banks, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Conclusion

The worldwide turmoil and violence resulting from growing inequalities require immediate attention. Extreme poverty constitutes violence and the violation of human rights. The United Nations has a central role in developing proper policies for poverty eradication. We need to protect vulnerable people and safeguard natural resources to ensure the well-being of all. Empowering people is the best tool to ensure poverty eradication and combat violence in our journey towards a sustainable future for all.

Note: The statement is endorsed by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council: Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Dominican Leadership Conference, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Salesian Missions and Sisters of Mercy of the Americas.