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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: rethinking and strengthening social
development in the contemporary world**

Statement submitted by International Movement ATD Fourth World, a non-governmental organization in general 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

Social development that leaves no one behind

Introduction

We welcome the theme of the fifty-third session of the Commission for Social Development, “Rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world” and we accept the challenge to examine our collective progress and to document the lessons we have learned. Rapid transformations in national economies, local communities, political structures and our environment have indeed presented great opportunities for progress. We believe, however, that it is critical to examine the gaps in social progress thus far, as well as the ways in which we can avoid exacerbating long-standing social problems in the future. Such a discussion must also contribute to the ongoing global dialogue on the post-2015 agenda to ensure that no one is excluded from the progress made or is left behind. ATD Fourth World’s own contribution to this discussion includes our comprehensive, participatory research report entitled *Challenge 2015: Towards Sustainable Development that Leaves No One Behind*.

We believe that social development in the contemporary world is the concern of every individual, every Government and every society. We acknowledge, with gratitude, the progress already made and strive for the achievement of evermore inclusive and holistic social programmes that recognize the worth and dignity of all. Towards this goal, we propose that people living in poverty serve as partners to evaluate impact through participatory methods; that qualitative and quantitative methods be used to gather information about the multidimensional nature of poverty; that social protection mechanisms and a guaranteed defence of human rights be provided for people living in extreme poverty; and that access to decent work serve as a pillar of social development in the contemporary world.

Proposals for rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world

Include people living in poverty as partners in evaluating the impact of social development through participatory methods and in building the foundation of lessons learned that inform future work

A participatory process would enable participants to speak about the violence of extreme poverty: a violation of dignity and of all human rights, worsened by processes of stigmatization, discrimination, humiliation and exclusion. Extreme poverty represents an unacceptable waste of human potential, a waste that can and should be addressed by social development. ATD Fourth World’s participatory research has made it clear that, very often, development works against, not for, people living in extreme poverty. Maladapted social development projects harm them. Investments frequently fail to reach impoverished people who do informal work or to provide them with high-quality health care, social protection, housing or sanitation.

The participation of people living in poverty in the implementation of legislation, policies and programmes that affect them is a key condition for the effectiveness and good governance of social protection programmes. People living in poverty should be recognized as partners who can contribute to the design,

implementation, monitoring and evaluation of such programmes. The right to participate is not only the right to speak without shame or fear of reprisal, but to be empowered and supported through capacity-building and human rights education to effectively express one's views. Civil society organizations can play a facilitating role, but ultimately Governments must be called upon to embark on the process of ensuring participation, building up trust with those most concerned and allowing people living in poverty to make their expectations known. Fighting against stigmatization and discrimination is crucial for furthering social progress and eradicating extreme poverty. The participatory evaluation process highlights the ways in which people experiencing poverty can participate more widely in the development process itself. Although there are many barriers, the participation of people living in poverty provides learning opportunities as well as regenerative processes for the people and institutions that commit to them.

Integrated quantitative and qualitative measures reflecting the multidimensional nature of extreme poverty allow for a more nuanced, comprehensive analysis of social development progress

Despite real progress in some regions in poverty eradication in recent years, the 2013 Multidimensional Poverty Index shows that, in the 109 countries analysed, 1.7 billion people are still living in multidimensional poverty, a situation defined by multiple and simultaneous deprivations in health, education and living standards. From the perspective of people living in poverty, there has been an overemphasis on the assessment of income or consumption. Those measures are important, and certainly easier to quantify, but they have contributed to an incomplete understanding of poverty. In order to better capture the different dimensions of poverty, particularly its social dimensions, it is necessary not only to listen to the views of people living in poverty, but also to combine quantitative and qualitative measures as well as to develop new measures, metrics and indicators.

It is also important to gather and report disaggregated data in order to monitor and attribute success on the basis of the lowest quintile in every country. In today's development discourse at the United Nations, there has been a surge in calls for a data revolution. Although this is an important need for the future of development, it is not enough. On the basis of aggregated measures, States can consider a particular goal to have been achieved when a certain percentage is reached. Yet attributing success in such conditions ignores the realities of the most excluded populations. ATD Fourth World proposes ending evaluations on the basis of national averages and granting "success" only when targets are reached at the lowest quintile of income or of the Multidimensional Poverty Index.

No social progress without the intentional provision of social protection mechanisms and a guaranteed defence of human rights for people living in extreme poverty

Social protection is a coherent, rights-based approach to social policy, ensuring people's access to basic services and social guarantees. But it is hardly, or not at all, available for the 1.6 billion people who live in extreme poverty. According to estimates by the International Labour Organization (ILO), about 20 per cent of the world's population, or 1.4 billion people, have access to comprehensive social protection, while the remaining 4 billion have access only to limited social protection coverage. ATD Fourth World supports ILO recommendation No. 202 concerning national floors of social protection; affirms social protection as an

investment in people; and advocates for nationally defined social protection guarantees aimed at preventing or alleviating poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion.

The lack of basic social protection is one of the main reasons that people living in extreme poverty are being left behind. We appreciate the guiding principles on extreme poverty and human rights and the role they play in establishing a rights-based approach to social development. We believe that such an approach is the most effective way to design and implement empowering and sustainable social protection floors, because it ensures compliance with human rights commitments in both the content and outcomes of policies, as well as in the process by which they are implemented. Equality, non-discrimination and participation, as well as transparency and accountability, are the key human rights principles that should guide the design and implementation of social protection policies. The implementation of multidimensional measures of poverty will lead to more suitable social protection and poverty eradication policies.

Respecting the principle of equality and non-discrimination means, first and foremost, that every effort must be made to ensure that nobody is excluded or left behind. Targeted schemes can be accepted as a form of prioritization of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups within a long-term strategy of progressively ensuring universal protection. Implementing the principle of equality and non-discrimination means that all services and benefits are of high quality and are accessible and available, both geographically and financially. States must ensure that social protection measures provide an adequate standard of living and are comprehensive and integrated.

Ensuring access to decent work for all is indispensable for the eradication of extreme poverty

Unemployment and underemployment plague the lives of people in poverty around the world. Vulnerable employment, comprising unpaid family work and self-employment, accounted for an estimated 58 per cent of all employment in the developing regions in 2011. Workers in these conditions are more likely to lack adequate social protection and often suffer from low pay and poor working conditions.

In a world with limited natural resources and growing inequalities, inclusive economic transformation is needed to address production and consumption patterns, distorted wealth distribution and the plundering of natural resources, as well as to eradicate extreme poverty. Inclusive economic transformation includes the protection of informal workers who are forced to go without the benefits of social security, such as maternity leave, sick leave, pensions and disability benefits. Research among a group of women living in poverty in Mauritius has taught us that, despite its drawbacks, informal work is the leading source of employment opportunities for people with limited access to formal-sector employment. As one woman in Mauritius explained, starting a small business is impossible and help from the Government does not reach the poorest. In order to reach the poorest members of society, it is necessary to create opportunities for specialized vocational training and skills development, taking special care to eliminate the discrimination that prevents people living in extreme poverty from accessing such opportunities.

Lessons learned about the role played by human rights and dignity at work in fostering true and equal social development have led ATD Fourth World to call for

the expansion of awareness and collective organization around workers' rights and the creation of reliable accountability mechanisms; the protection of informal workers; the stimulation of small businesses, microenterprises and workers' cooperatives; and the expansion of job training and life-long learning opportunities for people living in poverty.
