



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission for Social Development

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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 Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic, Inc., 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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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

### **Rethinking and strengthening social development: Strengthening social development through the empowerment of older persons**

The Maryknoll Sisters of Saint Dominic, a congregation of religious women working in twenty four countries around the world, support the efforts of ECOSOC in its work to promote social development. In accordance with this perspective, we would like to highlight the importance of empowering older persons so that they can, within their capacity, contribute to the strengthening of social development. The “social” aspect of development means that it is all inclusive and therefore no one must be excluded, for to do so would weaken the links that hold together the social development agenda. Although older persons may be physically limited in their contributions, society cannot underestimate their capacity to contribute to sustainable development.

The Political Declaration of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), Article 6, states that, “The modern world has unprecedented wealth and technological capacity and has presented extraordinary opportunities: to empower men and women to reach old age in better health and with more fully realized well-being; to seek the full inclusion and participation of older persons to contribute more effectively to their communities and to the development of their societies.” In support of this statement we propose that during CSocD54, the Commission emphasize the empowerment of older persons as a way towards a stronger social development agenda. Given the necessary tools that empower them as agents of social development, they can give of themselves as best they can by mentoring youth to become better leaders of the future.

Kofi Annan said, in his introduction of the MIPAA, “Each and every one of us, young and old, has a role to play in promoting solidarity between generations...”. We are convinced that intergenerational solidarity will mobilize necessary power to strengthen social development. Article 5 of the Political Declaration states, “We recognize that persons as they age, should enjoy a life of fulfilment, health, security and active participation in the economic, social, cultural and political life of societies”. No one can doubt that older persons’ knowledge and wisdom has laid the foundation that supports the world’s economic structure. However, rapid technological developments have left older persons with a sense of powerlessness because they think that learning ends with old age. Some older persons have disproved this belief by mastering new technologies that have enabled them embrace new carriers even in old age.

Just like everyone else, older persons have the right to physical, intellectual and psychological self-development through learning new skills that are in accordance with their energy levels. Many of the Maryknoll sisters are of advanced age but they continue contribute to social development through writing children’s books as well as conducting classes through Skype which enables them to reach students around the world. Therefore the Maryknoll Sisters would like to propose that the Commission include in its discussion, ways to overcome the difficulties that impede outreach to seniors such as the technology gap that exists between rural and urban areas. While it is easy to reach older persons in urban areas, it is a challenge to bring programs to those who live in rural areas. We would like to suggest

government-civil society partnerships that will work together to formulate and fund programs to serve the elderly in both rural and urban areas.

In conclusion, we want to stress the importance of elaborating policies that support the inclusion of the elderly in social development programs. This step will strengthen social development. Investments in services that benefit all citizens are investments towards the strengthening of social development. We urge the Commission take into account the points that we have reiterated in this statement during the political segment of CSocD54.

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