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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 Council on Social Welfare, 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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The adoption of the aspirational and action-oriented 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development creates a window of opportunity for all stakeholders — member states, civil society and the private sector to join forces in finding new solutions to the most pressing development challenges, including leading social policy issues. The International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW), one of the oldest international non-governmental organizations promoting social justice, social welfare and social development and dating back to 1928, fully supports forward-looking efforts of the Commission for Social Development, aimed at highlighting new approaches to social development and its quest for new ways and means that facilitate the transformative steps required for shifting the world onto a sustainable footing.

The new policy space created for social development with the adoption of the Agenda and shared understanding of the key concerns has to be explored and used at all levels, taking into account specific regional and country-level circumstances and variation between and within countries. While different approaches and tools are at the disposal of each country, in accordance with national priorities, the new forms of economic and social risks as well as poverty, growing vulnerability and insecurity must be addressed in a consistent manner to ensure that the shared dream expressed by the international community that “no one is left behind” does not remain as wishful thinking.

We believe that one of the best policy approaches for ending poverty, insecurity and exclusion, and building up resilience is establishing or strengthening social protection systems. In both our advocacy efforts aimed at promoting social protection and in technical assistance projects that we carry out at the country level, helping with the design of national systems of social protection, the ICSW approaches social protection schemes as investments rather than costs. We believe that social protection systems contribute to eradication of poverty, enhance human capital and productivity, and help reduce inequalities. We firmly support the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) Recommendation No. 202 concerning National Floors for Social Protection, and together with our partners in the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors, comprising more than 80 civil society organizations, we strive to increase awareness of the positive impacts of social protection floors around the world, engaging in dialogue at both government and civil society levels.

Recognizing the right to social protection as a human right has become an important part of the international development discourse. In this context we would like to draw the attention of the Commission to the recent Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights ([A/HRC/29/31](#)) where it is stated as follows (see para 51): “It is difficult to accept that a State that has no basic social protection floor in place, whether so called or not, is meeting its most basic obligations in relation to the economic, social and cultural rights of its citizens and others”. We completely share this position of the Special Rapporteur and appreciate his vision and efforts.

In its approach to social protection ICSW strongly supports universalism that since the 2000s has re-entered the development agenda. The preceding neo-liberal way in policy making and a package of market-led liberalization reforms with its

emphasis on means-testing and selectivity in access to welfare assistance and social services, resulted in numerous hurdles in administrating targeted schemes, with a higher costs for social services. At the national level, particularly in the case of low-income countries, targeting was mostly ineffective in addressing issues of rampant poverty and social exclusion.

A holistic approach to social protection financing should be considered, taking into account a financing mix that includes contributory and non-contributory programmes. Universal social protection includes adequate cash transfers for all those who need them, especially families with children; benefits and support for people of working age in case of maternity, disability, work injury or for those without jobs; and pensions for older persons. This protection can be delivered through social insurance, tax-funded social benefits, social assistance services, public work programmes and other schemes guaranteeing basic income security. ICSW believes that access to social protection, including basic income security and essential health care, should be guaranteed to anyone who needs such protection, taking into account specific national priorities and constraints. In this light, universal goals such as “social protection for all” are definitely following in the footsteps of already recognized international goals such as “education for all” and “primary health care for all”. Achievement of these lofty social objectives is within reach if a national consensus on spending priorities has been established and if political will of the government is supported by society at large.

The ICSW takes note and applauds the joint statement issued in June 2015 by the heads of the two global agencies — the President of the World Bank Group and the ILO Director General — in launching a joint programme of action to increase the number of countries adopting universal social protection, and wholeheartedly supports such a bold initiative. We hope that these commitments help both organizations in shaping effective country-specific policy advice, facilitating national efforts to find the most appropriate and effective ways and means of social protection, while at the same time providing a tangible boost to interagency cooperation in this area. As noted in the above statement, the new 2030 development Agenda “provides an unparalleled opportunity for our two institutions to join forces to make universal social protection a reality, for everyone, everywhere”.

We believe that, in their turn the Members States working within the remit of the Commission for Social Development may wish to consider elaborating a draft ECOSOC resolution on national floors of social protection as a necessary step towards universal, and comprehensive social protection for all. They should also take into account that once social protection floors are established and become operational at the national level, the achievement of core targets of SDG 1 (“End poverty in all its forms everywhere”) as well as SDG 3 (“Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”) comes within reach. In such a resolution the governments could be urged, *inter alia*, in accordance with national circumstances, to establish social protection floors as quickly as possible, and/or maintain existing social protection floors comprising basic social security guarantees. These would be a nationally defined set of essential goods and services consisting of a) essential health care, including maternity care, that meets the criteria of availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality b) basic income security for children, assuring access to nutrition, education and care; c) basic income security for persons of active age, with particular attention to sickness, unemployment, maternity and

disability; and d) basic income security for older persons, as adopted by the ILO Recommendation No. 202. Such a resolution fits well with the Follow-Up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, and would be essential in embedding the social protection problematic on the agenda of the Commission for Social Development, facilitating national implementation and monitoring.
