



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
1 December 2016

Original: English

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### Commission for Social Development

#### Fifty-fifth session

1-10 February 2017

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

### **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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

The priority theme of the 55th session of the Commission for Social Development — Strategies for the eradication of poverty to achieve sustainable development for all — is stimulating and inspiring as it firmly puts anti-poverty efforts undertaken globally and nationally in the context of the SDG framework. Striking a balance between social, environmental and economic goals is essential to ensure that the benefits of growth reach all people, especially the poor. When poverty is rampant, forcing people to survive from one day to another, then the lofty goals of “green growth” and sustainable development pale in comparison with the immediate needs of the poor and marginalized. It is widely admitted that the efforts aimed at poverty eradication are closely linked with mitigation and adaptation policies. At the same time the existing evidence confirms that eradication of poverty can bring numerous opportunities and benefits to society, facilitating concrete actions on the road towards sustainable development.

The International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) is one of the oldest non-governmental organizations dating back to 1928, being active within the general areas of social development, social welfare and social justice. We strongly support the efforts of all stakeholders participating in the work of Commission aimed at finding new policy solutions that have immediate as well as longer-term impact on poverty and inequality.

Addressing poverty effectively has been a challenge for most nations. Social exclusion and inequality emanating from varied dimensions of social, economic and political domains of life has made poverty a complex multifaceted phenomenon thereby demanding a nuanced approach when looking for solutions. While in some countries the state centric approach to poverty through various poverty eradication programmes has brought limited and impermanent results, in other cases micro initiatives at local levels do not offer the scale and proportion to make significant improvement in the conditions leading to poverty. It is in this context a facilitated promotion of people’s initiatives to address their daily livelihood vulnerabilities becomes important. Promotion of entrepreneurial potentials of peoples living in poverty and vulnerability is gaining importance in many countries, but such efforts must be nurtured and supported in society. People-centred policies that prevent and reduce poverty, upholding dignity of vulnerable individuals, families and groups are empowering and forward-looking. Such policies, when properly conceived and implemented, clearly make economic sense allowing individuals to enhance human capital, employability and productive assets, and at the same time facilitate more effective government involvement and better trade-offs in the quest for inclusive growth, productive capacity and sustainable development.

ICSW has a long history of advocacy and policy action on social protection. We approach social protection as a human right and an investment in people, seeing it as one of the proven ways for ending poverty, insecurity and exclusion. In this light we support the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection initiative unveiled during the UN General Assembly on 21 September 2016. Supported by the ILO and the World Bank, and bringing together several development partners, including intergovernmental bodies, international agencies, and non-governmental

organizations this global partnership aims at increasing the number of countries that provide universal social protection, as well as supporting countries in design and implementation of universal and sustainable social protection systems. This is an excellent and timely move, enhancing political momentum for social protection world-wide, and building up on important recent political achievements in this area.

ICSW recognizes that the key word in this context is universal social protection. The need to provide social protection to all members of society, fostering social justice, cohesion and resilience, is widely recognized internationally, but much more needs to be done at the national level to ensure that one of the core political principles of the new 2030 Agenda that “nobody is left behind” does not remain only on paper. There is still a wide gap between the uplifting recognition that social protection is a development priority, and a sober reality on the ground when almost three-quarters of the world population are deprived of adequate social protection, when millions of men, women and children do not have secure income and access to essential public services.

In this light ICSW reiterates its support for ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202). While the initiative for establishing national floors of social protection was put forward in 2009 by the UN Chief Executive board, the ILO Recommendation 202 provided practical guidance for setting such floors and building comprehensive social security systems for all. It is an important tool to promote a rights-based approach to social protection. At the same time we fully support the growing system-wide cooperation of the UN agencies in this area as well as active participation and involvement of other stakeholders. Together with our partners in the Global Coalition for the Social Protection Floors which brings together more than 80 members from civil society organizations worldwide we are exploring synergies and other ways to enhance international collaboration in the area of social protection in the longer run. Creating a platform for learning experiences, including the development of appropriate tools, as well as establishing collaborative links with national and regional social protection platforms and/or coalitions, members of the Global Coalition focus on promoting the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of social protection floors.

ICSW concurs with the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights who noted: “Implementation of the right to social protection through the adoption by all States of social protection floors is by far the most promising human-rights inspired approach to the global elimination of extreme poverty. In essence, those floors are guarantees of basic income security and access to essential social services for the whole population. No other operational concept has anything like the same potential to ensure that the poorest 15 to 20 per cent of the world’s poor enjoy at least minimum levels of economic, social and cultural rights” (United Nations. General Assembly. Extreme poverty and human rights. Note by the Secretary-General, [A/69/297](#), 11 August 2014).

Our organization strongly believes that addressing the issues of inequality and poverty reduction in a comprehensive manner requires linking human rights with social protection of individuals and communities. Social protection is a very important, truly vital element of progressive social policy attuned to the needs of people today and projected to the future. Universal social protection is an important enabling factor conducive to protecting human rights, developing human potential

and reducing income inequalities. Highlighting the importance of essential material conditions required for living with dignity, social protection facilitates upholding human dignity as a value and a legal principle, firmly linking it with social and economic rights. Moreover, it is an essential material prerequisite for the effective empowerment of people.

Social protection financing remains one of the key challenges on the road to universal coverage. Spending priorities are established at the national level reflecting different values, different social histories and different political trade-offs among competing needs. Creating a financing mix for both contributory and non-contributory programmes can facilitate implementing “nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors” as specified by the Sustainable Development Goal 1.3. This protection could be delivered through social insurance, tax-funded social benefits, social assistance services, public work-programmes and other schemes guaranteeing basic income security. ICSW reiterates 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.

ICSW believes that strengthening social protection is not only one of the best ways to reduce insecurity and deprivation in the world, but also an effective means to strengthening social approaches that add to economic dynamism and allow for the preservation and sustainable use of the environmental commons.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provided a boost to the social protection discourse, moving it forward on both the national and the international levels. The international community recognized the most important role played by social protection in eradicating poverty and achieving various sustainable development goals. Social protection was referred in the Agenda as a fundamental element contributing to outcomes across the areas of health, gender, decent work and inclusive growth and inequalities. The impetus created by the adoption of the 2030 Agenda signifies a new window of opportunity for all stakeholders in finding innovative solutions to the most pressing development challenges, including universal social protection.

ICSW affirms that a new high-level political “push” at the international level aimed at upholding social protection as a stand-alone issue would be highly desirable, particularly in the context of the intergovernmental policy dialogue and negotiations conducted at the United Nations in the wake of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Such an outcome of the multilateral negotiations would make it possible to capitalize on the growing recognition of the significant role that social protection systems, including floors play in societies. In that vein, a proposal is hereby put forward by the ICSW to the UN Member States working within the remit of the 55th session of the Commission for Social Development, namely, to consider elaborating a draft ECOSOC resolution on social protection systems, including floors as a necessary political step towards universal and comprehensive social protection for all. We urge the delegates to take into account the existing nexus between social protection and sustainable economic growth, noting that once social protection floors are established and become operational at the national level, the achievement of several core targets of the SDGs, starting with the reduction of poverty comes within reach.

We propose that the following elements, comprising basic social security guarantees and constituting a nationally defined set of essential goods and services, be included in such a resolution: (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.

The adoption of a dedicated ECOSOC resolution on social protection systems would be most important in focusing attention to some key issues pertinent to universal social protection, including floors, and its multiple benefits for society, thus reinforcing a political impact of ILO Recommendation No. 202. Such a dedicated resolution would become a testimony to the high-level political commitment to advance social protection at all levels. At the same time the UN-negotiated resolution would address a different political constituency. Such a resolution would fit 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, thereby facilitating national implementation and system-wide consistent monitoring of the agreed conclusions.

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