



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
30 November 2017

Original: English

Commission for Social Development

Fifty-sixth session

31 January–7 February 2018

**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 the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW), 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 people-centred and transformative plan of action, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs), represents a crucial international document applicable to all of us, balancing carefully the three dimensions of sustainable development — economic, social and environmental. The priority theme identified by the Commission for Social Development for the 2017–2018 review and policy cycle, namely “Strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all”, provides opportunity for a much-needed discussion within the framework of the Commission on the feasibility of new policy measures and practical tools aimed at eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions.

Our organization, International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW), fully supports the work of the Commission for Social Development in its quest for comprehensive and integrated approaches to achieve sustainable poverty eradication. Having consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council for many years enables us to provide a “voice” for our members around the world at the UN organs, leveraging their views into different platforms of international stakeholders. This summer ICSW will celebrate its 90th anniversary and its activities aimed at knowledge-building, advocacy of progressive social policy and transnational activism aimed at improving human well-being.

The multidimensional nature of poverty is widely recognized, and the dynamics underlying the process of poverty are an “Inter-locking deprivation trap”, creating conditions that negatively impact and debilitate the poor. Extreme poverty is a dehumanizing process, with long-term negative implications for human capital development. We believe that conditions leading to vulnerability of such groups as people with disabilities, older persons, particularly older women, and young children should be properly assessed and addressed in a comprehensive manner at the national and international levels. We believe that existing gender inequality and gender aspects of poverty should be carefully investigated, focusing on institutional capacity-building and measures to create a supportive economic environment aimed at poverty eradication. At the same time, we reiterate that prescribing a universal set of actions in this regard considered valid for all countries is hardly possible and can be counterproductive.

Therefore, sustainable poverty eradication cannot be achieved without implementing a well-focused set of mutually reinforcing social and economic policies attuned to the national circumstances and implemented in an integrated manner. Understanding poverty from a multidimensional perspective can facilitate concerted actions by national governments and international bodies. Our experiences on the ground provide evidence that interventions by both the state and non-state actors need to be analysed from the perspective of addressing poverty with sustainable results, making the lessons learned known across nations and continents.

Food and nutrition security is one of the key issues among the development priorities of many poor countries. Along with many national governments and international agencies, the ICSW views food and nutritional insecurity among people as detrimental to the goals of creating well-being and development for all and thereby posing significant challenges in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The inability to obtain sufficient quantities of safe and nutritious food to meet nutritional requirements and at times physical survival by large numbers of people in the world, especially poorer communities, is indicated by the prevalence of high levels of undernourishment among these population groups. Several factors such as rising food prices, disruption of livelihoods through conflicts, climate change or economic policies, declining agriculture, growth of

informal economies, extreme poverty and absence of affordable health-care may contribute to the generation of food insecurity.

One should not overlook the fact that prevalence of food insecurity and hunger can coexist with high levels of economic prosperity highlighting the existence of societal inequalities. Chronic hunger and food insecurity also imply violation of human rights, as food constitutes a basic social and economic right, enshrined in national constitutions and international covenants. More recently, 'Zero Hunger' has been adopted as a key sustainable development goal to be met by all nations over the coming decade.

Given that extreme poverty and hunger in developing countries are mostly rural phenomena, investment in agriculture and rural development are vital pre-requisites to eradicating hunger.

Poverty eradication requires innovative thinking and careful analysis of new approaches. We are living in an era that seems to be crying out for new models of development, particularly in the face of climate change. Not only do we have to deal with multiple and recurring crises in the areas of finance, energy and food, to name just a few, but also there is growing recognition that today's normative agenda has to be much more encompassing, not solely relying on the state's ability to deliver welfare and development outcomes. We should not overlook the power of various collective units in achieving sustainable growth with equity. In this context a social and solidarity economy (SSE) approach should be emphasized. This approach is increasingly being used to refer to a broad range of organizations that are distinguished from conventional for-profit enterprise, entrepreneurship and informal economies by two core features. First, they have not only explicit economic but also social (and often environmental) objectives. Second, they involve varying forms of cooperative, associative and solidarity relations. They include, for example, cooperatives, mutual associations, NGOs engaged in income generating activities, women's self-help groups, community forestry and other organizations, associations of informal sector workers, social enterprise and fair-trade organizations and networks.

Conceptualizing and operationalizing the social and solidarity economy approaches can promote sustainable poverty reduction through encouraging social entrepreneurship and other collective community initiatives. Hence it can increase the toolbox of poverty-eradication policy measures.

In addressing the multiple dimensions of poverty and deprivation social protection systems play a salient role. Widely used to reduce vulnerabilities and to build resilience, social protection has been recognized by the international community as an essential policy instrument to eradicate poverty, reduce social exclusion and build human potential. Social protection reduces income inequality, contributes to food security and reduces hunger.

To this end, 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 eradicate poverty and to achieve multiple benefits for society, including human capital development and social inclusion. The recommendation is based on a firm legal ground — article 9 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This Covenant protects the right of everyone to social security, including social insurance. Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights also recognizes this right. While the right to social security is a self-standing right,

it is also crucial to the practical realization of the right to an adequate standard of living, mentioned in article 11 of the above Covenant.

Together with our partners in the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors that brings together more than 100 NGOs, the ICSW 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. We see universal social protection as an important element of progressive social policy attuned to the needs of people today and projected to the future.

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. 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.

Our experience on the ground confirms 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 policies 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 national and international levels. The international community recognized the critical role played by social protection in eradicating poverty and achieving various sustainable development goals. Social protection was referred to 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 initiative 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 multilateral negotiations would make it possible to capitalize on the growing recognition of the significant role that social protection systems play in societies. In that vein, we reiterate our proposal to the UN Member States working within the remit of the 56th 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 toward 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. Our proposal has been endorsed by the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors with which we are working closely. ICSW has been a member of the Global Coalition since its establishment in 2012.

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.

Such resolution would represent an important contribution to the progressive realization of universal social protection initiatives supported at the international level by several specialized agencies of the UN system, including the ILO and the World Bank.

The adoption of a dedicated UN ECOSOC resolution on social protection systems would be most important in focusing attention to some key issues pertinent to universal social protection, and its multiple benefits for society, thus reinforcing the political impact of ILO Recommendation No. 202. We are convinced that such a dedicated resolution would become a testimony to a 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 framework into the agenda of the Commission for Social Development, thereby facilitating national implementation and system-wide consistent monitoring of the agreed conclusions.
