



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission for Social Development

#### Fifty-first session

6-15 February 2013

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and  
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:**

**priority theme: promoting empowerment of people in  
achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full  
employment and decent work for all**

### **Statement submitted by World Youth Alliance, 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.



## **Statement**

The recognition that all human beings have intrinsic dignity is the only foundation for human rights. It is the intrinsic worth of the human person that provides the basis on which to found policies and laws that create conditions under which human beings can flourish. Without such a foundation, human rights are articulated and enforced based upon the subjective preferences of those in power, thus undermining the entire human rights project and leading to violations of human rights.

The World Youth Alliance, a global coalition of young people promoting the dignity of the human person in policy and culture, welcomes the priority theme for the fifty-first session of the Commission for Social Development: “Promoting empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all”. Poverty eradication is central to the achievement of sustainable development. Efforts to achieve sustainable development must focus on eliminating poverty in order to enable people to live in conditions in which they can flourish. The World Youth Alliance will highlight the immeasurable value of the human person and the importance of supporting the family, harnessing youth potential and advancing authentic solutions to poverty eradication for the achievement of person-centred sustainable development.

### **The immeasurable value of the human person**

Poverty eradication takes place at an individual level, by educating and investing in persons and enabling their creativity and natural capacities to develop and flourish. The human person is the Earth’s greatest resource. Once freed from poverty, a person has an immeasurable capacity to innovate and contribute to development. People must have access to the resources that they need to utilize their ingenuity and to make the best decisions for themselves. These resources include access to education, health care and skills training. The State is responsible for good governance, curtailing corruption and ensuring that conditions exist for human beings to bring themselves out of poverty and flourish in accordance with their intrinsic dignity.

Coercive population policies or policies that emphasize and encourage the reduction of the population are never appropriate because they cannot create solutions to the problems posed by poverty. Governments and societies must choose to invest in the potential of people instead of promoting a world that has fewer people. Humans are innovators and problem solvers and, when we encounter obstacles to development, it is critical that the person be empowered to step in and present solutions. For example, in the area of food supply, a growing population drives up prices in the short term because of increased scarcity, but these higher prices attract potential entrepreneurs who create new solutions, which then cause prices to decrease. Human creativity can provide limitless opportunities to eliminate poverty and poverty-induced problems. People are not the problem. People are the solution.

### **The family**

Poverty eradication requires strong families who take seriously their duties and responsibilities in caring for their members and building intergenerational solidarity.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society. The determination that the family is the fundamental group unit of society necessitates the support and protection of the State, which must recognize the key role of the family in the eradication of poverty.

The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society because it is the place where children are nurtured and raised, thus ensuring the future of society and the State. The family is “natural” because it is prior to the State, and not created by the State. The State must recognize the family as the fundamental unit that enables social functioning and development. The family is therefore both prior to, and necessary for, the development of free, healthy and flourishing societies. Support for the family, because of its importance with regard to social functioning as well as the care and well-being of children, the aged and the most vulnerable, should be provided at the political and the cultural levels in order to eradicate poverty.

### **Youth**

The potential of youth is immeasurable, and investment in young people will produce equally immeasurable returns. In many countries of the world, particularly in the developing world, there is a youth majority with the creative potential to transform society. As a consequence of poverty and the associated absences of adequate health care, education and employment opportunities, much of the creative potential of young people is lost. Approximately 87 per cent of youth live in developing countries. Youth comprise around 40 per cent of the world’s unemployed people. Youth literacy rates are below 80 per cent in some parts of Africa and Asia. Today, millions of adolescents, particularly girls, face the prospect of incomplete education, which increases their chances of living in poverty and of contracting infectious diseases. Youth are disproportionately burdened by economic problems, particularly unemployment. Access to educational opportunities and skills training is thus essential to provide them with what they need to succeed.

The strength of the family is of primary importance to youth because it influences the way in which they will respond to issues and difficulties in their lives. The encouragement and love that a young person experiences in family life are directly related to how well he or she does in school and consequently have an impact on employment opportunities. Therefore, support for the family is essential in recognizing and promoting the dignity of young people, especially as they relate to poverty eradication.

### **Poverty eradication solutions**

To eradicate poverty, there must be appropriate political, legal and economic systems that allow people to be problem solvers and entrepreneurs and that allow them the freedom to take risks and use their creativity to innovate. Political rights and economic freedoms are critical for the flourishing of human creativity.

Moreover, an emphasis on the value of the ingenuity of the human person requires that the most basic needs of the person be met, as people are generally not able to exercise their ingenuity if they are plagued by problems resulting from living in poverty. There has already been an incredible increase in the average life expectancy around the world, but people in rural areas and developing countries have a continuing need for the provision of even the most basic health-care services.

The provision of maternal health-care services, including prenatal and postnatal care and emergency obstetric care, protects mothers, who serve in their families and communities as caretakers, providers and teachers and whose health affects the health of their children. Access to education is paramount, as is skills training, which allows people to contribute in a meaningful manner to the achievement of economic and social development.

Poverty eradication also requires improved transportation infrastructure and networks. Transportation is critical to any economy because it carries products, people and messages. An effect of improved transportation is a decrease in disease and famine since people have easier and cheaper access to goods. It is by ensuring that the fundamental needs of each person around the world are met, including health care, education and access to goods, that we will see the eradication of poverty.

### **Conclusion**

Policies that allow creativity to flourish and that put people at the centre of development concerns are essential to achieve sustainable development. Billions around the world live in poverty, and the solution to this is not to reduce the world's population. Instead, it is to work towards a world where everyone's essential needs are met. We must foster the creative force of humanity to develop authentic and person-centred responses to the problem of poverty.

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