

Commission for Social Development

Fifty First session

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Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*

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 Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

Introduction

The Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd welcomes the theme of 'Promoting empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all.' Since girls and women who are oppressed by abject poverty are at the center of grass roots programmes and direct service projects within our organization we value emphasis on the word 'empowerment'. Poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work, the three major pillars of the World Summit for Social Development and of the 24th special session of the General Assembly, are at the heart of 'empowering girls and women.' These are vital in breaking the vicious cycles of infringement of girls and women's human rights, addressing personal, social and economic exploitation and gender based violence. Successful programmes empowering girls and women are being implemented in over 70 countries within our organization. However progress is restricted by structures and systems that dis-empower, exploit and violate human rights; there is lack of an enabling environment at national and local levels.

Theme of the Commission – an Opportunity

The priority theme for the Commission for Social Development 51st session provides an opportunity to explore the multi-faceted aspects of empowerment as these impact poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all. This review year opens to an expanded horizon with the recommendations of the 'Future We Want' A/66/L.56 outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the Beyond 2015 discussions currently taking place. The challenge to the Commission is to creatively and holistically uphold a people centered development, ensuring that a strong and vital social development component founded on human rights and social protection are part of the proposed sustainable development goals while recognizing and effectively addressing the disempowering effect of structures that are exploitative of people, resources and the planet.

Empowerment principles jeopardized

The global economic, environmental and political crises of our day have jeopardized principles of empowerment, poverty eradication, decent work, and social cohesion. We have seen increased inequality, exploitation and marginalization in pursuit of concentrated wealth to the detriment of social well-being. Economic globalization has failed. The Commission for Social Development has the opportunity to engage Member States with persuasion, dynamism and creativity in processes framing new paradigms of development that will ensure that people are at the center. A free market economy does not lead to a more equal distribution of income, eradicate poverty nor create decent work. Structural change based on human rights is required. We envision structures that uphold the dignity of every person, and structures that facilitate implementation of policies that are principled, just, transparent and transformative.

Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights – Elements of an empowering environment outlined

A human rights-based approach is foundational in establishing an enabling environment. Human Rights have been given continual elaboration in the various international conventions including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and more recently the process of Universal Periodic Review. The Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights adopted at the Human Rights Council HRC 21/11 of 21 September 2012 is a useful tool for States in the formulation and implementation of poverty reduction and eradication policies. ‘The Guiding Principles are premised on the understanding that eradicating extreme poverty is not only a moral duty but also a legal obligation under existing international human rights law. Thus the norms and principles of human rights law should play a major part in tackling poverty and guiding all public policies affecting persons living in poverty.’ A/HCR/21/39 Paragraph 1

The Social Protection Floor - A global strategy, nationally tailored, having real potential

Social security is not only a human right but an economic and social necessity, yet seventy five to eighty percent of the global population has no access to comprehensive social security systems and protection. Social protection programmes tackle multiple dimensions of poverty and deprivation (decent work, education, health care, food security, income security) and are powerful tools promoting social wellbeing. The establishment of a national social protection floor is a strategy with real potential to make basic social security accessible to all.

Social protection – and in particular the concept of a social protection floor – has been increasingly recognized as a key development instrument at international fora. The UN Millennium Development Goals Summit in September 2010, the social protection committee of the European Union, the G 20 Labour and Employment Ministers’ Meeting and Summit in November 2011, and the International Labour Conference in June 2012 all affirm social protection. The publication ‘Sharing Innovative Experiences: Successful Social Protection Floor

Experiences' produced in partnership between the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labour Organization in February 2011 highlights 18 case studies from 15 countries of the global South, demonstrating Social Protection Floors to be a most successful tool in reducing social vulnerabilities and making progress toward achieving and sustaining the Millennium Development Goals.

'Social Protection for a Fair and Inclusive Globalization', a report published by the Social Protection Floor Advisory Group under the Leadership of Ms. Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director, UN Women argues that a social protection floor can enhance social cohesion, eradicate poverty, facilitate people participation, contribute to improved human capital development and stimulate greater productive activity. The report also shows how social protection has helped to stabilize aggregate demand in times of crisis, to increase resilience against economic shocks, contributing to accelerate recovery towards more inclusive and sustainable development paths.

The adoption on 14 June 2012 of the International Labour Conference Recommendation 202 concerning 'national floors for social protection' is promising. Social protection floors are nationally defined sets of basic social security guarantees which secure protection aimed at preventing or alleviating poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion. Implementation of social protection floors aim at extending essential health care and basic income security to millions of people. In the words of Ms. Michelle Bachelet "Extending social protection is a 'win-win' investment that pays off both in the short term, given its effects as a macroeconomic stabilizer but also in the long term, due to the impacts on human development and productivity." http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_166292/lang--en/index.htm

A coalition for Social Protection Floors comprising NGO's from the Global South and North in support of the ILO Recommendation 202 has formed. This new coalition will advocate to advance social protection based on human rights for all people in all parts of the world.

The Coalition has four major aims: i) to influence international debates on a social protection floor and raise awareness of the ILO Recommendation 202, ii) to create a platform for learning experiences among civil society organizations worldwide, including contributing to the development of tools, iii) to collaborate with national and regional social protection platforms and/or coalitions, where these exist, and iv) to advocate for the formation of inclusive coalitions, where these do not exist, aimed at promoting the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of social protection floors.

Conclusion and Recommendation

States have opportunities for real leadership in facilitating a global paradigm shift through transmitting the Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights into national laws, policies and programmes and implementing the International Labor Organization Recommendation 202 on nationally defined Social Protection Floors. These are giant steps forward towards creating an empowering environment and achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all. We support this Commission toward this end.

We recommend all members states to:

1. Transmit the Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights to national level.
2. Implement nationally designed social protection floors according to the International Labour Organization Recommendation 202.

Endorsed by:

Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Dominican Leadership Conference, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Passionists International, Salesian Missions, Inc., Sisters of Charity Federation, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, The Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Council, UNANIMA International