



**Statement by H.E. Bob Rae (Canada)**

**President of the Economic and Social Council**

Commission for Social Development Sixty-third session

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Mr. Chair,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to welcome you to the sixty-third session of the Commission for Social Development. We all know that we are confronted with a wide range of challenges that define the current global economic and social landscape.

Let me suggest to you that the values that we bring to this discussion were best expressed in 1979 – at the time known as the French Revolution. When the slogan was quite simple: liberty, freedom, equality and fraternity – which today we would consider is best expressed by the word solidarity. And as our Secretary-General has pointed out, in today's day, solidarity is actually a necessity – it's a matter of requirement – we must move forward together.

Global hunger has remained at roughly the same level for three consecutive years and the persistently high number of people living in extreme poverty is now at pre-pandemic levels. The impact of climate change is ongoing, and social inequalities continue to pose real threats to the world, particularly to those already in vulnerable situations and the challenge that we face is that we risk undoing the important progress we have made.

This year, the high-level political forum will focus on the theme: "Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient, and innovative solutions". Your discussions here will provide an important step towards the HLPF.



It's important for us to recall how we came together in 1995 for the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development in shaping a fairer global society. If you consider what we said and did in Copenhagen in 1995 and then look at how far we have come – it's a truly remarkable story – we have made significant progress. But the events of the last several years have threatened that progress and that's why we have to recommit to it. The expression of solidarity is that for many people life has gotten better and we need to understand this reality. In many parts of the world, hundreds of millions have been lifted out of poverty and of conditions that had endured for hundreds or thousands of years – that's a remarkable story. But we must recognize those that have been left behind.

I want to talk about a couple groups who are left behind, those who are getting older and those who are young. And when we look at the statistics for how things are going – a very simple statistic which is unemployment you have to look at unemployment for young people. Can they get a job, can they get their foot on the ladder? And if they can't then it creates a huge range of social problems.

The ageing issue is important because demographics is everything and as the population gets older, we need to ask ourselves if we are in fact engaging that population. And that's why I personally agree that developing an international legal instrument on the rights of older persons could strengthen our efforts and shift perceptions of older people and what we can do to allow older people to remain active participants in our societies.

So, we need to amplify the voices of old people and the voice of young people. And we also have to accept the fact that one of the other great frontiers where we have not made as much progress as we need to, is the situation of those people who are disabled. Because despite the progress made for a great many people, we have not made anywhere near the amount of progress that we need for people who are disabled.

When we look at financial inclusion, healthcare, water, ICT and disaster resilience, we have not given a sufficient priority to those who are least able to protect themselves. We have made some improvements in education laws, accessible early warnings and online services, but urgent action is needed to fully align with



the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. And on my last point, we must never lose sight of gender equality, and we cannot go backwards. We will not achieve the goals we want to achieve across the SDGs – we will not achieve it – unless we make progress on equality with women.

But we do have some elements which have helped us like the Summit of the Future where we found a way to build important momentum, which will take us into the Second World Summit for Social Development. The Commission's work will provide critical input to this Summit, ensuring that the voices of all people are heard. It's about having a vision about the necessary next steps we need to take.

I would suggest the Political Declaration which comes out of Doha is concise, action-oriented, and fit for purpose to meaningfully address the current and emerging issues affecting social development. I am glad that my bureau colleague, Krzysztof from Poland, referred to the issue of trust. How does mistrust happen? We all know how it happens; it happens when we don't do what we say we will do. Expressions of an exaggerated kind often don't get done and that creates mistrust. Maybe we should promise less and do more. Our ability to execute must grow.

Last week we had very good meetings of the ECOSOC Coordination Segment and the Partnership Forum. We all agreed we needed to break down the siloes and barriers between us and we need to continue to be inspired by those conversations. These are tests we have, and all must overcome.

I wish you luck in your deliberations.

Thank you.