

## **Commission for Social Development - 55<sup>th</sup> Session**

### **Contributions in Preparation for the ECOSOC Integration Segment, 8-10 May 2017**

#### **“Making eradication of poverty an integral objective of all policies: what will take?”**

##### **A. Priority theme of the 55<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission for Social Development**

The fifty-fifth session of the Commission for Social Development was held from 1 to 10 February 2017, with the priority theme of “**Strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all**”. This was the review year of the two-year review and policy cycle. The Commission’s theme was fully aligned with that of the 2017 High-level Political Forum.

The Commission also reviewed progress in implementing the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action and relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups, the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development and the emerging issue, “Promoting integrated policies for poverty eradication: youth development in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

During this session, in addition to its general discussions, the Commission convened three high level panel discussions on: (a) the priority theme; (b) the emerging issue: Promoting integrated policies for poverty eradication: youth development in the 2030 Agenda, and (c) Leaving no one behind: poverty and disability.

##### **B. Contributions to the ECOSOC Integration Segment: issues, challenges and opportunities**

###### **a. Priority theme of the Commission: Strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all**

Member States presented their national experiences and shared national perspectives on strategies that have been effective for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all. The high-level panel discussions and general debate on the priority theme highlighted the huge progress that has been made in reducing absolute poverty at the global level. However, this progress has not been accompanied by a similarly large reduction in the numbers of people living in relative poverty. These are people living under a specific percentage of national income per capita. Those living in relative poverty are still vulnerable to falling back into absolute poverty. A more worrisome trend is that those living in the most extreme poverty had been left behind in the past decades of development progress.

Concern was further raised that further progress is being hampered by several global trends. These include weak global economic growth, volatile world financial markets, high levels of unemployment, worsening humanitarian crises and the effects of ongoing climate change. The Commission expressed further concern that the international community has seen a rise of new threats to the ideals of a more inclusive world. Major threats include calls for

strengthening exclusionary national economies and the scapegoating of refugees, migrants, and religious and ethnic minorities. Concern was also expressed regarding the impact of conflicts, the influx of refugees and economic sanctions on social development in some countries.

Hence, at this review session in the two-year cycle of the Commission's work, delegations shared national experiences that have had a positive impact on poverty eradication. These include investments in education and healthcare, agriculture and infrastructure development, promoting full and productive employment and decent work, provision of universal social protection, and promoting the empowerment of the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including women, children and youth, indigenous peoples and local communities, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons. The importance of better direct interventions to tackle rising inequality and to meet the needs of the poorest was also identified as critical. Countries need to adopt more pro-poor growth strategies that include providing schooling, health care, and labour market opportunities, as well as work to remove biases in public spending and taxation against those living in poverty. The role of redistributive policies was stressed, especially through social protection systems in developing countries. However, these countries tend to be less effective at reaching those citizens living in poverty, due to constraints in information, incentives, budget, and politics.

Policy-makers should have a menu of smart social policies at their disposal, including conditional cash transfers and workfare programmes that should be integrated, with adaptive monitoring and evaluation, to ensure countries learned from their mistakes. Effective policies to eradicate poverty require broad-based domestic support and social consensus about their role, especially from the middle class who may not benefit directly from policies and programmes for those in poverty but should also be able to rely on the social protection systems implemented by states. Panellists and contributors from the floor noted that social policy, including social protection and social justice, to reduce poverty, inequality and promote inclusion must take place within the context of a social consensus of solidarity to support people living in poverty and in vulnerable situations. This may require efforts to sensitize the wider population about the need to reduce poverty, promote prosperity and wellbeing, share resources and power, as well as ensuring that the benefits of such policies are distributed equitably within countries and not just in small pockets of support.

#### **b. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

The Commission reaffirmed its support to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the thematic reviews of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development as part of its work to promote social development. It was further stressed that the Commission should continue to implement its mandates emanating from the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. The Commission underscored the need for the international community to implement these development frameworks in an integrated manner. Delegations pointed out that the Commission could

serve as an effective coordinator within the United Nations system on a wide range of social development issues to make substantial contributions to the effective implementation of the social dimensions of the 2030 Agenda, by providing integrated and coherent policy guidance to advance the overarching objective of “leaving no one behind”. In that regard, several countries highlighted their “blueprints” for national implementation of the commitments contained in the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Several countries reported that they have already mainstreamed SDGs in national development plans and have created platforms to coordinate and monitor the work.

**c. Leave no one behind: Investing in people and promoting empowerment to reduce poverty**

The Commission recognized the enormous role that it can play in providing guidance on inclusive policies. It strongly underscored that no development can be sustained if millions of people are left behind. Building on the Commission’s experience in promoting a people-centered approach to development, it places human dignity at the center of all efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development. It further underscored that the 2030 Agenda is inextricably linked to the rights of women, young people, older persons, indigenous people, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. These groups continue to disproportionately face major obstacles to their development, while people living in extreme poverty lack the political power and equal opportunities to take charge of their destiny. Hence, human dignity must be at the centre of any sustainable development process. Public policy must focus on improving their voice, participation and dignity. Participation and ownership of programmes by people living in poverty should be central to rights-based anti-poverty efforts. This may include affirmative action and anti-discrimination policies to improve participation of women in the public and private sector.

To underscore the objective of leaving no one behind, the Commission held two high-level panel discussions on “promoting integrated policies for poverty eradication: youth development in the 2030 Agenda” and “poverty and disability”. The panel discussion on youth and the 2030 Agenda shed a spotlight on challenges faced by young people, particularly high levels of youth unemployment and inequality. It was emphasized that the success of the 2030 Agenda hinges on the empowerment and involvement of young people. Panellists underscored that youth development is a key driver of poverty eradication around the world. Among the greatest challenges facing many countries today are inadequate human capital investment and high unemployment rates among youth. Young people should acquire the education and skills needed to contribute in a productive economy. Panellists highlighted the fact that several priorities for youth development are specifically identified in the 2030 Agenda, increasing the need for the development, implementation and monitoring of robust, innovative and progressive youth policies for achieving the sustainable development goals.

The Commission also shared national, regional and global experiences and innovations in poverty alleviation for persons with disabilities. The panel discussion on disability and poverty underscored the need to incorporate disability into all development efforts and the obligations of States and international organizations to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities demanded full participation in decision-

making and emphasized the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by, for and with persons with disabilities.

#### **d. Importance of policy coordination for poverty eradication**

The 2030 Agenda underscores the need for a coherent and coordinated approach to policymaking, implementation, monitoring and evaluation across all sectors. This will require policymakers to formulate coherent and integrated policy to eradicate poverty by identifying and streamlining competing priorities and creating synergies among the three pillars of sustainable development. The Commission underscored that further progress in eradicating poverty would require enhanced policy integration and coordination and economic reforms that would make markets work better for people living in poverty, avoiding major financial crises, and mitigating and adapting to climate change. Social policies need to be integrated into a broad approach to poverty eradication, which should include fiscal policies, labour market policies, trade policy, and public investment decisions including in the area of infrastructure, in order to stimulate markets, trade and employment. This approach does not require new policies per se, but rather a better integration of existing programmes and ensuring coherence among them. Strategies and policies to eradicate poverty in all its forms must be tailored to national realities. Further progress can be made if strategies and policies are tailored to national realities and when policymakers are willing to learn from mistakes and adapt to evidence of failure.

#### **e. Partnerships**

International cooperation, including through honouring ODA commitments, capacity building, technical cooperation and domestic resource mobilization were identified as critical to eradicating poverty. Ending poverty also requires more effective and innovative national development strategies backed by an enabling international environment. Some panellists noted that integrated and sustained approaches to poverty reduction require a shift in the understanding about poverty, from a purely government problem, to a societal one, that requires partnerships at all levels of society to address. Multi-stakeholder partnerships involving civil society such as trade unions, the private sector as well as government, are crucial in policies to combat poverty. Governments can help encourage these partnerships to happen but other stakeholders must also share some responsibility.

#### **f. Policy design and monitoring**

The Commission highlighted the importance of policy design based on a strong evidence base. Hence, disaggregated data must inform social policy dialogue. Equally important is better mapping and understanding of poverty experiences at the household and community levels. Evidence from poverty mapping and multi-dimensional poverty indices facilitate better targeting and registry of households living in extreme poverty.

### C. Key messages

- While economic growth has been a critical factor in reducing global poverty over the last two decades, growth alone is not sufficient. Policy interventions that turn growth into pro-poor growth are more effective at reducing poverty and inequality.
- Active macroeconomic policies should promote employment growth. More importantly, countries need to prioritize and push for integrated approaches when it comes to trade, finance and investment policies, active labour markets and social and environmental policies.
- An enabling international environment as well as honouring existing ODA commitments is critical to poverty eradication efforts for the most vulnerable countries and, in particular, African countries, the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and countries in situations of conflict and post-conflict countries.
- Political will and a broad societal consensus are prerequisites for successful policies for sustained poverty eradication efforts.
- It is equally important to combat inequality among and within countries as well as foster social inclusion, promote social justice and human rights and tackle discrimination.
- To attain the principle of leaving no one behind, countries should pay greater attention to promoting the empowerment of people living in poverty and people in vulnerable situations, including women, children and youth, indigenous peoples and local communities, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons. It is important to involve all social groups as full partners when designing, implementing and evaluating policies that affect them.
- There is an urgent need to strengthen national statistical capacity and monitoring systems to ensure access to disaggregated data which are of high quality.
- Global partnerships, including north-south, south-south and triangular cooperation have an important role to play in eradicating poverty, promoting full and productive employment and decent work for all and building momentum towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.