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**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**

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Cuore, non-governmental organizations 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

Introduction

We welcome the priority theme of the 55th Session of the Commission for Social Development: “Strategies for the eradication of poverty to achieve sustainable development for all.” Poverty eradication has remained a top priority for many years for most governments and the United Nations, yet it continues to be the greatest challenge of our time. Today 10.7% of the global population lives in poverty and one in ten people live under \$1.90 a day. According to the International Labour Organization, 40% of workers are not earning enough to keep their families above the \$1.90 a day poverty line. Since most governments have begun the process of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, it is important to consider the lessons learned from the past and develop new strategies. Civil Society organizations and Faith-based organizations (FBOs) are closely involved in poverty eradication, using different tools with or often without the support of their governments. “The world does not lack the resources to abolish poverty; it only lacks the right priorities” (ILO DG, Juan Somavia). We would like to share some of our experiences and recommendations for furthering this agenda.

Build coalitions of local NGOs/FBOs to engage in public policy processes

The current global economic system has left not only people living in poverty but also those working with them — NGOs and Faith-based organizations — out of the process of policy making. Confinement to a rigid silos approach, whether it is regarding politics, religion, or gender roles, has often excluded the poor, especially women, from decision-making and access to information in public and private spheres. We advocate for the use of collective wisdom by integrating different actors to address not only the political, cultural and socio-economic categories that disempower the poor but also to offer a holistic “economy of life” for the benefits of all, particularly those in greater need.

Engage the poor themselves to transform their lives

One of the failures of poverty eradication is the notion that “we know what is best for you” (governments and donors). Scant attention is given to invite people living in poverty for their full participation in poverty eradication efforts. The need is to enable people living in poverty to create wealth for themselves as a means to end poverty. Poverty is not an individual issue; it is a societal, global and systemic issue. An assets-based approach to development which draws on the strengths and potentials of the people themselves — human, social, physical, natural, economic and political — will create economic opportunities. It is our experience that by developing a system that builds on the total assets of a community, people can lift themselves out of poverty and that can be a first step towards promoting cooperative models for collective ownership. Legal empowerment of those living in poverty is important to help them organize and manage their assets.

Provide Social Protection to rural farmers to eradicate poverty

Most poor rural households in the developing world depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Three quarters of the 767 million who live in poverty are farmers.

They live in places where they have no access to agricultural inputs and outputs, credits, and roads to transport their goods to the market. The abject poverty they face — malnutrition, illness, lack of education — limit their capacity to improve agricultural productivity. Raising farm income is an important measure to eradicate poverty; increasing the productivity of small farmers will benefit the poorest populations.

Social protection in the form of social assistance and agricultural interventions can reduce poverty and food insecurity. While such measures stimulate economic activities, they also enhance nutrition, health and education, which together have significant implications for future productivity, employability, and overall well-being. Social protection programs which are gender-sensitive strengthen women's control over income and enhance maternal and child welfare. Many developing countries have successfully implemented social protection schemes. Embracing this strategy by all countries ensures that “no one is left behind.” National vision and commitment, supported by budgetary allocations and local implementation plans which include capacity building, will allow the poor to transform their livelihood strategies.

Improved management of land and water resources

These measures will help to reduce poverty among farmers. Access to irrigation systems help farmers to be less dependent on weather conditions and to diversify their livelihood and facilitate increased incomes. The trend of land and water grabbing by major corporations for agriculture, biofuels and timber should be stopped. Small rural farmers are being displaced to give way to industrialization of agriculture, while overlooking the rights and needs of the people.

High cost seeds, pesticides, introduction of Genetically Modified Organisms on farming

In some parts of the world, marginal farmers who depend on seasonal rains to grow cash crops are burdened with huge debts incurred in the purchase of GMO seeds and pesticides. With no safety nets to protect them, crop failure has led to suicides in some places. The monopoly of the seed sector by some big corporations through patenting is controlling the life of farmers around the world. In the rural world, seeds are a source of life and they are denied the right to preserve seeds for future use.

Climate Change and its impact on agriculture

The uncertainties of weather and accelerating climate change as well as the lack of affordable insurance schemes have an adverse effect on subsistence farmers. Prolonged droughts, floods, desertification, etc. affect both the productivity and quality of crops and food security in general, making the small farmers extremely vulnerable. Climate-induced greenhouse gas emissions are also affecting crops. Even though much remains unknown, farmers must be prepared for adaptation methods in agricultural production and governments should take steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. If not, rural farmers will be forced to become climate refugees — as internally displaced persons or refugees in other countries.

Access to land is important for economic well-being

Many rural households engaged in subsistence agriculture do not own land; they either sub-let or lease another person's land to farm. According to the World Bank, increasing land rights is 'the key to reducing poverty,' for land rights increase their wealth. The state has to ensure the security of tenure and keep the transaction costs low to make land rights accessible. State recognition of the property of persons living in poverty would make their assets more valuable than foreign aid. It is also essential to increase the claim to land by women individually or as joint owners. Research has shown that economic participation of women makes them less vulnerable and has a positive influence on household expenditure patterns.

We recommend that Member States:

- involve NGOs/FBOs and other actors in public policy processes on poverty eradication
- initiate an assets-based approach to development for full participation of people living in poverty
- provide Social Protection to rural farmers to improve productivity and increase quality of life
- improve land management and water resources
- eliminate monopoly practices of multinational corporations on Seeds
- insure farmers against climate change related crop failure
- increase access to land for rural households and women
