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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: “Advancing Social Development and
Social Justice through Coordinated, Equitable, and
Inclusive Policies”

**Statement submitted by Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the
Good Shepherd, Grail, The, Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary-
Loreto Generalate, Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, and
VIVAT International, 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

The Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary-Loreto Generalate, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, The Grail, Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, and VIVAT International welcome the 64th Session of the Commission on Social Development's focus on "advancing social development and social justice through coordinated, equitable, and inclusive policies". Our organizations support women, girls, their families, and communities in over 100 countries, offering programs that enable them to claim their human rights.

We urge global leaders to take immediate action on the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Doha Political Declaration of the Second World Summit for Social Development to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Equitable and inclusive policy centered on the three core themes of social development – poverty eradication, the promotion of full and productive employment and decent work for all, and social integration – lays the foundation for social justice and human flourishing.

We remain deeply concerned by the enduring reality of global poverty as a driver of injustice.

- **Poverty and Inequality:** Approximately 808 million people, or 9.9 per cent of the global population, continue to live in extreme poverty, up from earlier World Bank estimates. According to The World Social Report 2025, global working poverty has declined overall, over one-third of the world's population live on daily incomes between \$2.15 and \$6.85, leaving them highly vulnerable to even minor shocks.
- **Lack of Social Protection:** According to the 2025 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Report, more than half of the world's population (52.4 per cent) is now covered by at least one form of social protection, but 3.8 billion people, predominantly in low-income countries, still lack access. Low-income countries allocate only 2 per cent of their GDP to social protection, compared to the 25 per cent spent by high-income nations.
- **Precarious Employment:** The same report shows that despite a record-low global unemployment rate of 5.0 per cent in 2024, job quality remains poor. Over 57 per cent of the global workforce is informally employed. Women in Least Developed Countries are disproportionately affected, with 93.8 per cent of women in informal employment compared to 86.4 per cent of men.

These findings point to the need for coherent and coordinated policy that is equitable and inclusive, leaving no one behind. We demand urgent, focused attention on the most vulnerable populations to ensure that global poverty eradication, the promotion of full and productive employment and decent work for all, and social integration become a shared and attainable reality.

We are troubled by the barrier corruption poses to the development of equitable and inclusive policy. For example, corruption in flood control projects, as evidenced by the scandals reported by our networks in the Philippines and South Asia, constitutes a grave moral, social, and ecological failure. Floods become devastating not by nature, but because of corruption, elite neglect, and profit-driven development.

- **Human Rights Violations:** Deadly floods threaten the right to life and security, while forced displacement undermines the right to housing and livelihood. Ecological integrity is compromised as rivers, wetlands, and forests are destroyed to justify economic strategies.

- **Undermining Sustainability:** Government commitments to the SDGs are undermined, including SDG 11 (Resilient Cities and Communities), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).
- **Moral Failure:** Corruption violates the principles of the common good, stewardship of creation, and the preferential option for the poor. It is about stolen lives, dignity, and futures, deepening poverty among the most vulnerable.

In addition to institutional corruption, our networks report continued lack of access to quality education, health care, food security, and labour protection - all of which contribute to increased levels of poverty and social exclusion. Marginalized groups experience systemic discrimination and unfair cultural standards that further reduce their ability to improve their socioeconomic status and well-being.

Our network on the Africa continent reports that AI could deepen socio-economic disparities, displace workers, particularly in low-skilled labour sectors, and increase unemployment. AI models dominated by global languages marginalize African and Indigenous languages. Only 0.02% of internet content is available in African and Indigenous languages, limiting the development of AI models that can serve diverse linguistic and cultural needs. A shortage of skilled AI professionals restricts innovation. Many universities lack AI-focused programs. This talent gap, if left unaddressed, risks deepening the global AI divide.

Many countries lack comprehensive AI policies to address issues like data privacy, algorithmic bias and accountability. Without clear governance frameworks, AI systems may be misused or fail to gain public trust, especially in sectors such as law enforcement, healthcare and finance where ethical considerations are paramount.

We therefore appeal for bold, decisive action by governments and global leaders to achieve commitments made under the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Doha Political Declaration, and to undertake the following:

Global Finance and Investment:

- **Debt and Reform:** Reform international financial institutions to address global inequities, cancel unsustainable debt, and create a UN Framework Convention on Sovereign Debt to ensure that heavily indebted countries can realize social development.
- **Redirect Funding:** Redirect resources from military investment to investments to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Inclusive and Equitable Policy and Systems:

- **Comprehensive Social Protection:** Build inclusive social protection systems that address the multidimensional nature of poverty by integrating accessible health, education, and rural development programs.
- **Full Participation:** Include people with lived experience, especially women and girls, directly in the design, implementation, and assessment of social development policies.
- **Ensure Rights:** Implement and/or reform legislation to ensure equal and equitable access to quality and affordable education, affordable healthcare, social protection, and living wages for everyone without discrimination.
- **Protect Vulnerable Groups:** Ensure the rights, dignity, and protection of migrants, refugees, and displaced persons and guarantee access to education, healthcare, housing, and decent work for all, regardless of status.

AI Development and Regulation

- Trade and investment partnerships: Facilitate technology transfer agreements to provide nations with access to advanced AI tools, especially on the African continent, fostering mutually beneficial economic relationships.
- Talent development: Expand AI-specific capacity building by establishing AI research institutes, funding scholarships and providing training programs that develop a workforce capable of driving AI innovation. Expand digital literacy programs to ensure AI benefits are widespread and inclusive, enabling greater participation in the digital economy.
- Ethical and regulatory governance: Assist nations in developing comprehensive AI policies that address ethical concerns, such as data privacy and algorithmic biases. Create AI ethics frameworks that include African and Indigenous perspectives to ensure that AI systems are fair, inclusive and aligned with local values.
- Align AI strategies with development goals: Ensure alignment with regional development agendas, including Africa's specific sustainable development agenda, and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Corruption and Accountability:

- Transparency and Justice: Full investigations, prosecution of corrupt officials, and recovery of stolen funds are necessary. Safeguards must be in place for truth-tellers, journalists, and advocates.
- Prioritize People and the Environment: Prioritize communities and the environment. We appeal to the UN and global partners to monitor corruption and ensure funds for climate adaptation and mitigation.

We affirm our commitment to stand with marginalized communities and advocate for justice and life, and the realization of equitable and inclusive policies that ensure the flourishing of people and planet.
