

Commission on Social Development 61st Session 2023 (6-15 February 2023)

Analysis of the Priority Theme Resolution with special attention to the Advocacy Priorities

Introduction:

Priority Theme Resolution: “Creating Full And Productive Employment And Decent Work For All As A Way Of Overcoming Inequalities, To Accelerate The Recovery From The Covid-19 Pandemic And Full Implementation Of The 2030 Agenda Development” E/CN.5/2023/L.7

NGO Social Development Committee’s world view is aligned with people who live in poverty, who are frail, or suffer stigma and discrimination. We agree that full and productive employment and decent work for all will reduce inequalities and advance sustainable development. Our advocacy priorities indicate that such employment must include wage policies that provide livable wages and equal pay for work of equal value, the formalization of work that reaches out to the unpaid care economy and migrant labor forces. The voices of people who are on the margins must be included in the design of inclusive, human-centered policy and programs which are rights based and non-discriminatory to advance such employment. Education, skills training and especially digital training need to be provided for all throughout the life course. The creation of policies and programs as well as financing of universal social protections, social services, education, health care and affordable housing must be a priority for Member States and multisectoral and multilateral approaches are needed for developing countries.

The work of the 61st session deserves praise in that it highlighted social protection as a front-line response to protect people’s health, jobs and incomes and further that digital, green and care economies provide many opportunities for decent work. Many of the interventions by Member States sought to promote programs and policies that echoed the advocacy priorities of NGO Social Development and concern for vulnerable populations. However, in light of the urgency and concern noted in the preamble of growing inequality and 1.2 billion people living in multidimensional poverty subsequent to the pandemic, the priority theme resolution lacks the boldness, creativity and new commitments needed to move forward to achieve the SDGs, end poverty and leave no one behind.

In line with our advocacy priority on equal pay for work of equal value between men and women, the Resolution invited Member States to promote equal opportunities and reduce discrimination in the labor market.

Although Member States are called upon to promote gender equality in the labor market and eliminate gender stereotypes and all forms of violence and unfair practices, we regret the omission of a call to ratify ILO conventions to facilitate the achievement of SDG 8 and especially the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention (C190), [the first-ever international treaty on violence and harassment in the world of work](#). Paragraph 32 does “take note” of ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No.202) when discussing the capacity of social protection floors toward the realization of human rights for all and to reducing inequality and poverty.

Governments were also encouraged to foster the transition from informal to formal work in all sectors, which constituted a key point of our advocacy efforts. Basic income, along with child and maternity benefits, disability benefits and pension were among the significant steps identified to close the social protection gaps. Our advocacy issue-area of labor rights for all migrant workers, and in particular women migrant workers, was explicitly noted in the call to Member States to protect labor rights, promote decent work and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants.

Further, in this time of new challenges and fast paced change, NGO CSocD advocacy priorities and the Civil Society Declaration called for support of a World Social Summit in 2025 with a renewed social contract and a renewed commitment to the SDGs, reducing inequalities, ending poverty and achieving inclusive societies with full and decent employment for all. The resolution notes the report of the Secretary General “Our Common Agenda” in the preamble but disappointingly did not support the recommendation of a World Social Summit in 2025.

Summary of the Resolution E/CN.5/2023/L.7:

- 1. The preamble notes with urgency and concern the growing inequality and 1.2 billion people living in multidimensional poverty subsequent to the pandemic.*
- 2. The preamble “noted” the proposal contained in the report of the Secretary General in “Our Common Agenda” to convene a World Social Summit in 2025 to give momentum toward the achievement of the SDGs, but there is no endorsement or support in the operative paragraphs.*
- 3. In a document about decent work and productive employment, it seems to be a grave omission that there is no call to ratify ILO conventions and especially ILO C190 (2019) which aims to free workplaces of violence and harassment, recently ratified by 25 countries.*
- 4. The Resolution is very long and redundant. It contains 62 operative paragraphs, with very little action language. In fact, it gently highlights, welcomes, and reiterates (1x), takes note (2x), invites, urges, acknowledges (4x), stresses (5x), reaffirms (6x), recognizes (7x), and “encourages” (19x). Ten paragraphs were devoted to financing, “urging” and “encouraging” MS to live up to their previous commitments.*
- 5. “Calls upon” (9x) Member States to: 1-Promote and Protect Human Rights (5); 2-establish well-designed programs that ensure equal opportunities and treatment in the world of work for vulnerable populations (20); 3-protect labor rights of migrants (22); 4-achieve gender equality, by removing barriers to women accessing and remaining in the workforce (25); 5-adopt policies and programs to redistribute women’s and girls’ share of unpaid care and domestic work through ...gender-responsive social protection programs (46); 6--mitigate the harmful effects of the pandemic on the education of children (49); 7- the international community to assist developing countries in human resource development strategies along with the private sector and civil society (53); 8-to implementation of existing commitments on technology transfer on mutually agreed terms (55); and 9-to strengthen multilateral cooperation toward inclusive growth, sustainable development and external debt sustainability of developing countries (60).*

6. Paragraph 32 “recognizes” that ‘nationally appropriate’ social protection systems contribute to the realization of human rights for all and that promoting universal access to social services and providing ‘nationally appropriate’ social protection floors can address social exclusion, taking note of the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No.202).
7. Paragraph 33 takes this a little further and “encourages” Member States to invest in building social protection systems that are...universal, combine social insurance and non-contributory (tax financed) schemes ... so that everyone has social protection over the life course (including unpaid caregivers, the missing middle and informal workers). This is the most explicit paragraph that mirrors the concerns of the NGO community and makes some effort to move the needle forward to protect vulnerable people.
8. Paragraph 39 encourages Member States to consider supporting the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for a Just Transition, including through the promotion of decent work and sustainable and universal social protection systems.
9. Acknowledges the increase in child labor and “urges” MS to secure the prohibition and ensure the elimination of child labor by 2025. A very welcome operative paragraph, but not included in the Advocacy Priorities.
10. The consensus of the Advocacy Committee is that the Resolution has some language that reflects our advocacy priorities but that it is a weak document that lacks the boldness, creativity and new commitments needed to achieve the SDGs especially SDG 8 and 10, end poverty and leave no one behind.

Advocacy Priorities / *Resolution*

FOR FULL AND PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK:

1. ADDRESS GROWING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY THROUGH UNIVERSAL SOCIAL PROTECTION, WAGE POLICIES AND FORMALIZATION OF WORK.

Recommendations:

- Recognize, redistribute and support unpaid care work with social protection systems and floors and reaffirm that care work is a collective responsibility to be equally shared among men and women, and across society.

The resolution acknowledges, albeit indirectly, the 'unfair division of unpaid care work' as one of the main barriers that prevent women from accessing, remaining and progressing in the labour market (OP 25). It 'calls upon Member States to adopt policies, programmes and other measures to recognize, reduce and redistribute women's and girls' disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work'. In doing so it promotes the 3Rs framework to address the issue (in OP 46), but then in the following paragraph (OP 47) it weakens this call by using the verb 'encourages' to details the possible measures and policies that governments can take to realize the 3Rs.

In particular OP 24 promotes the equal sharing of responsibilities between parents, access to childcare facilities, work-family balance but fails to recognize the principle of co-responsibility, whereas unpaid care work should not only be more equitably shared between men and women, but also beyond families across society, with government and the private sector also taking their share of responsibility.

In OP 33 and OP 36 the resolution encourages Member States to build national social protection systems that support the inclusion of those who are often left out of social protection (including unpaid caregivers and informal workers) - and frames this as an investment, but it fails to explicitly call for universal protection systems or social protection floors.

Other concerns:

- *The resolution lists maternity and paternity leaves as part of solutions in several places of the resolution, but fails to specify that these leaves must be adequately paid.*
- *The motherhood penalty is totally absent from the resolution.*

- Promote formalization of work so that all workers' rights are protected both in the informal economy and self-employment.

18. Stresses the need to address challenges faced by those working in informal or vulnerable jobs, **by investing in the creation of more decent work opportunities, including providing access to decent jobs in the formal sector;**

19. Encourages Member States to accelerate efforts to promote the transition from informal to formal work in all sectors through integrated strategies that comprise nuanced and differentiated measures for decent work and reliable social protection, including by leveraging e-formalization policies and supporting new and growing sectors such as the care economy, sustainable economy and digital economy to absorb informal workers, and to establish appropriate interventions that can strengthen the capacity of employers and workers to comply with existing standards and regulations of paying taxes and **making social security contributions in ways and intervals tailored to the income patterns of informal and rural economy workers, by supporting the adaptation or simplification of regulations and procedures, establishing incentives to formalize and strengthening government oversight and capacity-building of tax and labour inspection services and social security;**

33. Encourages Member States to invest in building national social protection systems that are, as appropriate, universal, risk-informed, gender-responsive and family-oriented, that combine social insurance and non-contributory (tax-financed) schemes, to ensure that everyone has access to comprehensive, adequate, progressive and sustainable social protection over the life course, through design and implementation features that support the inclusion of those in vulnerable situations who are often left out of social protection systems (including unpaid caregivers, the “missing middle” and informal workers)

36. Acknowledges the vital role that sustainable social protection systems play in the COVID-19 pandemic response, and encourages Member States to ensure that recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic provides a policy window for the countries concerned to address their significant gaps in social protection coverage by making progress towards universal, adequate, comprehensive and sustainable social protection systems, by including, in accordance with their **national legislations, basic income, child benefits, maternity benefits, sickness benefits, disability benefits, unemployment benefits and old-age pension, and that these social protection systems should identify and close coverage gaps,** especially for those who are in vulnerable situations, including informal workers, migrants and unpaid carers;

38. Stresses the need to **better coordinate social protection policies and measures with poverty reduction programmes and other social policies** to avoid excluding people in informal or precarious jobs, and recognizes the need to promote transitions towards the formal economy, expanding and upgrading existing social assistance programmes by increasing benefit level and coverage to informal workers,

41. Further encourages Member States to facilitate the effective and meaningful participation and empowerment of those in vulnerable situations, including those most affected by the pandemic, those working in the informal economy and those living in poverty, in the design, implementation and monitoring of COVID-19 recovery plans;

46. Calls upon Member States to adopt policies, programmes and other measures to recognize, reduce and redistribute women's and girls' disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work and the feminization of poverty, which is exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic,

including through poverty eradication measures, labour policies, public services and gender-responsive social protection programmes;

47. Encourages Member States to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, particularly by women, and enhance efforts to ensure equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, and to promote work-family balance as conducive to the well-being of children, youth, persons with disabilities and older persons and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, inter alia, through the improvement of working conditions for workers with family responsibilities, expanding flexible working arrangements, including through the use of new information and communications technologies, and providing and/or expanding leave arrangements, such as maternity leave and paternity leave, and adequate social security benefits for both women and men, taking appropriate steps to ensure that they are not discriminated against when availing themselves of such benefits and promoting men's awareness and use of such opportunities, for their children's developmental benefit and as a means of enabling women to increase their participation in the labour market;

- Insist on equal pay for work of equal value between men and women, and establish non-discriminatory livable wages.

13. Invites Governments to undertake the necessary adaptations to policies and regulations to support decent work and employment growth, foster equal opportunities and reduce inequalities and discrimination in the labour market, by enhancing effective labour market institutions, by enabling adequate remuneration through measures such as statutory or negotiated minimum wages, equal pay for work of equal value, employment protection legislation and employment law, and their effective implementation so that all workers enjoy labour rights;

20. Calls upon Member States to establish well-designed programmes that are aimed at ensuring equal opportunities and treatment in the world of work and facilitating and supporting the inclusion in the labour market of those in vulnerable situations, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, older persons, Indigenous Peoples, migrants, members of national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, and people living with HIV, including by strengthening active labour market policies and social protection systems;

24. Encourages Member States to implement policies that ensure women's economic empowerment by supporting the full and productive participation of women in the labour market, including women with disabilities, and those living in poverty and female heads of household, and to promote equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, the equal sharing of responsibilities between parents, access to childcare facilities, work-family balance, including, inter alia, while caring for children, older persons, persons with disabilities, and by promoting their full, equal and meaningful participation in the economy and in decision-making processes at all levels;

25. Calls upon Member States to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and ensure non-discrimination, racial and cultural diversity and inclusion, and equity by developing and implementing an integrated and comprehensive approach through the entire life course, by removing barriers that prevent women from accessing, remaining and progressing in the labour market, such as gender stereotypes, all forms of violence, including

gender-based violence, discriminatory laws and practices and the unfair division of unpaid care work, by closing gender pay and pension gaps and by further realizing equal pay for equal work, including care work;

47. Encourages Member States to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, particularly by women, and enhance efforts to ensure equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, and to promote work-family balance as conducive to the well-being of children, youth, persons with disabilities and older persons and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, inter alia, through the improvement of working conditions for workers with family responsibilities, expanding flexible working arrangements, including through the use of new information and communications technologies, and providing and/or expanding leave arrangements, such as maternity leave and paternity leave, and adequate social security benefits for both women and men, taking appropriate steps to ensure that they are not discriminated against when availing themselves of such benefits and promoting men's awareness and use of such opportunities, for their children's developmental benefit and as a means of enabling women to increase their participation in the labour market;

- Create "Decent Work" by legislation and regulations assuring safe and secure work environments free from abuse, harassment and violence.

25. Calls upon Member States to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and ensure non-discrimination, racial and cultural diversity and inclusion, and equity by developing and implementing an integrated and comprehensive approach through the entire life course, by removing barriers that prevent women from accessing, remaining and progressing in the labour market, such as gender stereotypes, all forms of violence, including gender-based violence, discriminatory laws and practices and the unfair division of unpaid care work, by closing gender pay and pension gaps and by further realizing equal pay for equal work, including care work;

29. Further encourages Member States to respect, promote and realize the right to work and to prevent and eliminate unequal division of domestic care, violence, abuse and sexual harassment, while recognizing that violence and harassment are a threat to equal opportunities, are unacceptable and incompatible with decent work and may prevent women from accessing, remaining and advancing in the labour market;

- Commit to the global implementation of Universal Social Protection Systems and floors, recognized as a way to reduce inequalities, alleviate poverty and honor social inclusion.
- Increase sustainable employment opportunities and productivity of labor for low-income groups in rural and agricultural areas.

(3 references in rural and just 1 in agriculture i.e. agricultural banks)

15. Stresses the importance of developing policies to expand work opportunities and labour productivity in both rural and urban sectors by achieving and recovering inclusive economic growth, investing in human resource development through ongoing training and skills development for the new forms of work,

19. Encourages Member States to accelerate efforts to promote the transition from informal to formal work in all sectors through integrated strategies that comprise nuanced and differentiated measures for decent work and reliable social protection, including by leveraging e-formalization policies and supporting new and growing sectors such as the care economy, sustainable economy and digital economy to absorb informal workers, and to establish appropriate interventions that can strengthen the capacity of employers and workers to comply with existing standards and regulations of paying taxes and making social security contributions in ways and intervals tailored to the income patterns of informal and rural economy workers, by supporting the adaptation or simplification of regulations and procedures, establishing incentives to formalize and strengthening government oversight and capacity-building of tax and labour inspection services and social security;

38. Stresses the need to better coordinate social protection policies and measures with poverty reduction programmes and other social policies to avoid excluding people in informal or precarious jobs, and recognizes the need to promote transitions towards the formal economy, expanding and upgrading existing social assistance programmes by increasing benefit level and coverage to informal workers, including seasonal and casual labourers in rural areas

- Maximize the benefits of labor migration for origin and destination countries and protect and promote labor rights for all migrant workers, and in particular women migrant workers.

22. Calls upon Member States to protect labour rights, promote decent work and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment, and recognizes that the positive contribution of women migrant workers has the potential to foster inclusive growth and sustainable development in countries of origin, transit and destination, underlining the value and dignity of their labour, in all sectors, including in care and domestic work;

- Promote and facilitate the right to unionize for all workers

2. ENACT INCLUSIVE, PEOPLE-CENTERED AND GENDER-SENSITIVE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS.

Recommendations:

- Increase participation of people living in poverty, seeking employment, or needing education and up-skilling in the development of policies and programs to affirm human dignity and eliminate all discriminations.

The Resolution calls upon Member States to establish well-designed programmes that are aimed at ensuring equal opportunities and treatment in the labor market, especially for persons who are in vulnerable situations including women, youth, persons with disabilities, older persons, Indigenous Peoples, migrants, members of national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, and people living with HIV (20). Also encourages MS to include them in the design, implementation and monitoring of COVID-19 recovery plans;(41)

- Encourage transparency and accountability in a rights-based approach evaluating gender sensitivity, sustainability, and inclusivity of all program development.

Calls upon Member States to promote and protect human rights, in accordance with their obligations under international human rights law. (5) Encourages programs that affirm of the fundamental dignity of the human person (9) and when designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating social protection programmes to ensure gender mainstreaming throughout this process; (34)

- Strengthen trust and reliability through accountability mechanisms between communities, institutions, and other stakeholders, and create safe spaces to empower all members of society to be part of a social dialogue on the ongoing process of sustainable development.

Invites consideration of labour market policies that strengthen institutions and provide adequate labour protection to all workers, through social dialogue and minimum wage policies, taking into account the role of workers' and employers' organizations, (17) and to adopt public policies to combat unnecessary bureaucracy and corruption, as well as illicit financial flows, and strengthen good practices on assets return and recovery. (27)

Calls upon the international community to strengthen multilateral cooperation, by mobilizing resources for an inclusive recovery and making use of special drawing rights and its voluntary channeling allocation to countries most in need, and recognizes the role of the United Nations and of the international financial institutions, in accordance with their respective mandates, and encourages them to continue to support global efforts towards sustained and inclusive growth, sustainable development and the external debt sustainability of developing countries; 60.

-> Comment: Precise accountability mechanisms are not really mentioned, and the language "encourages" does not reflect a strong commitment from MS.

3. PROVIDE EDUCATION, SKILLING, UP-SKILLING, AND DIGITAL TRAINING, FOR ALL.

Recommendations:

- Ensure affordable access to quality and life-long education so that all people can reach their potential as individuals and contribute to the transformation of a peaceful, prosperous, and human-rights based society.
- Ensure a safe working environment and decent pay for educators, and a safe, equitable, inclusive, and healthy learning environment for students.
- Promote universal access to the internet and digital technology, as a public good and a right for all.
- Provide digital training and mobile technology for all, including persons with disabilities, women and girls, and older adults to eliminate the digital divide.

OP 11. OP 49,

*Encourages Member States to ... invest in the promotion of **education, lifelong learning and skills training; education infrastructure...** and affordable access to the Internet and connectivity, including by working to ensure that service delivery is aimed at progressively reaching universal access, with particular attention given to the needs of those in vulnerable situations (11). This paragraph falls far short of universal access to the internet as a public good and right for all by using the adjective “affordable.” Clearly, a call for the ratification of ILO c190 would have covered the safe workplace and the mention of equal pay for equal work in paragraph 25 does not help the gendered nature of the teaching profession. The call must be to “value” the contribution of teachers to a peaceful, prosperous, human rights based society.*

Calls upon Member States to prevent the harmful effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children by mitigating the damaging socioeconomic impacts, including by ensuring the continuity of child-centered services and policies on an equal and attainable access basis, upholding the right of the child to quality education, including early childhood education, on the basis of equal opportunity and non-discrimination and supporting education that is inclusive, equitable and accessible (49)

4. INVEST IN INITIATIVES AND POLICIES FOR HUMAN CAPITAL CREATION AND REDISTRIBUTION.

Recommendations:

- Invest in human capital through universal health care, education, job training, housing, universal social protections, and in sustainable resilient infrastructure and technology
- Extend debt relief and forgiveness for the least developed countries based on values of justice and solidarity
- Establish “A Global Fund for Social Protections” to support the least developed countries through official development assistance, increased international cooperation on taxation, and contributions from international financial institutions.

Resolution: OP-4, 33, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 44, 47, 50, 51, 52, 53. 55. 60.

The Resolution “recognizes” the need for strengthening international cooperation to provide financial assistance, technical support and capacity-building to developing countries to achieve the SDGs. (4). It also recognizes the importance of MS investing in inclusive and responsive family-oriented policies (35), basic income (36), social services (38), cash transfers (44), education (9,40), health care(35), housing (40, 44) work-life balance (47), digital technology, internet access and connectivity,(40) safe water and sanitation. infrastructure (40). Investment in universal social protection systems are noted and encouraged for all including unpaid caregivers, the “missing middle” and informal workers, along with access to essential services, high quality education and health-care services. (32, 33, 36, 37,44, 46),

It encourages multilateral commitments to developing countries and recognizes that domestic resource mobilization, underscored by the principle of national ownership and supplemented by international assistance, will be critical to realizing the SDGs.(50) Reaffirms the Addis Ababa

Action Agenda, recognizes the need for increased mobilization of financial resources (51), and calls upon the international community to assist developing countries along with the private sector and relevant civil society actors to provide and mobilize financial resources, capacity-building technical assistance and technology transfers (53). It calls upon the international community to strengthen multilateral cooperation toward sustained and inclusive growth, sustainable development and the external debt sustainability of developing countries.(60) and welcomes steps to improve the effectiveness and quality of official development assistance based on the fundamental principles of national ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results and mutual accountability. (58)

Encourages solidarity and calls upon developed countries to implement their official development assistance commitments, to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance to the least developed countries (54). International “solidarity” is a great concept and is good language important to keep in mind for next year’s resolution..

->There is no mention of “A Global Fund for Social Protection” but there is encouragement to consider supporting the implementation of the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for a Just Transition. (39).

5. HIGHLIGHT AND ENERGIZE THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS A RENEWED SOCIAL CONTRACT AND THE WORLD SOCIAL SUMMIT IN 2025.

Recommendations:

- Forge a “Renewed” Social Contract anchored in human rights for a new era in which people, states and other actors work together to foster trust, increase participation and inclusion, and redefine human progress and development.
- Fully support the call of the Secretary-General’s proposal to hold a World Social Summit at the highest political level in 2025 on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Copenhagen Declaration.

This is the primary advocacy of the Civil Society Declaration. There are no corresponding operative paragraphs, only a noting of the Secretary General’s Report “Our Common Agenda” in the Preamble.

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