

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

Advocacy Priorities

Priority Theme: “Creating Full And Productive Employment And Decent Work For All As A Way Of Overcoming Inequalities, To Accelerate The Recovery From The Covid19 Pandemic And Full Implementation Of The 2030 Agenda Development”

As representatives of civil society, the NGO Committee for Social Development presents its recommended priorities for Member States and the United Nations. Our world view is aligned with people who live in poverty, who are frail, or suffer stigma and discrimination. As we approach CSocD61, we agree that full and productive employment and decent work can reduce inequalities and create opportunities. This will be a positive outcome only if the policies and programs are rights based and non-discriminatory, if the voices of people who are on the margins are included in the design of policy and programs to advance such employment, and if supported by the financing of universal social protections, social services, education, health care and affordable housing. Further, as we face new challenges and fast paced change, we need to move toward a World Social Summit in 2025 with a renewed social contract and a renewed commitment to ending poverty and achieving inclusive societies with full employment for all.

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.
- Promote formalization of work so that all workers's rights are protected both in the informal economy and self-employment.
- Insist on equal pay for work of equal value between men and women, and establish non-discriminatory livable wages.
- Create “Decent Work” by legislation and regulations assuring safe and secure work environments free from abuse, harassment and violence.
- 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.
- 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.
- Promote and facilitate the unionization of workers to ensure their protection and rights.

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

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.

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.

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.

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NGO CSocD Advocacy Priorities for full and productive employment and decent work:

Rationale for Recommendations

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

According to the ILO, decent work is “productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and human dignity.” To promote decent work, there needs to be a comprehensive and integrated strategy cutting across a range of policy areas and involving a range of stakeholders to formalize informal jobs while preserving the job creation and income generation potential of the informal economy. New policies should promote the protection and incorporation of workers and economic units in the informal economy into the mainstream economy. Today, the informal economy is central since more than 60% workers are in this sector, 58% of which are women. Unpaid care work benefits the whole society and economy, yet it is a major obstacle to women's access to decent work; reaffirming collective responsibility is thus important. It must be more equitably shared between men and women, and across society.

Each year millions of women and men leave their homes and cross national borders in search of greater security for themselves and their families. Migrant workers face hardships and abuse in the form of low wages, poor working conditions, absence of social protection, denial of freedom of association and workers' rights, discrimination and xenophobia. The workers most vulnerable to abuse of human and labor rights are women migrant workers, especially domestic workers, migrant workers in irregular status, trafficked persons and youth migrant workers.

Social protection systems including floors are essential to reduce inequalities (SDG 10). Alongside with establishing a non-discriminatory liveable wage, it is a direct way of

addressing inequalities and the gender pay gap, as well as protecting working families during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Universal social protection and universal access to healthcare, education and essential services allow people to escape not only intergenerational poverty but also social exclusion. Social protection systems include, inter alia, pensions for older adults, cash transfers and benefits for vulnerable groups, especially women and children, and provides support for working women on maternity leave, and for all workers through disability or job loss periods.

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

Meaningful participation of people with direct experience of extreme poverty and seeking employment is key to developing effective policies, programmes and projects to overcome social exclusion. Non-participation in decision-making prevents progress in respecting and promoting human rights for all. The foundation of constructive discussion enables inclusive social dialogue, ensuring that all workers' rights are respected.

Equitable and sustainable development is fostered by participation and transparency that will strengthen trust between institutions, stakeholders and communities, and empower all members of society to be part of a social dialogue. Trust is fundamental in a global context where fear, mistrust and isolation are on the rise. Mechanisms for empowering all members of society are particularly vital in a period of growing inequalities, when economic and political power are increasingly concentrated in the hands of the few and human dignity is often a forgotten value of our world.

Systematic evaluation of a full, genuine, and rights-based participation is essential, in order to share knowledge, experiences and innovative approaches to public policy and governance at national, regional and global levels.

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

Education is central to empowering disadvantaged groups, raising earning potential, and creating a productive workforce. Education and training programs can prepare young people and adults not only to enter the labor market but also to become builders of the collective future we want.

Education is a fundamental human right (SDG 4). Even before the pandemic, 260 million children and youth were out of school and 53% of children in low- and middle-income countries were lacking in reading comprehension by the end of primary education. Adult literacy rates were steadily growing, but 750 million youth and adults lacked basic literacy skills (UNESCO (2021/2)). The pandemic has further contributed to documented learning loss, teacher shortages, and a wider digital divide which means that remote learning is not a solution for many children living in poverty.

Education is key to a productive workforce and economic advancement. The commitment to quality education requires ensuring decent working conditions, labor rights, decent pay for teachers, and social dialogue involving teachers in policy decisions. Inclusive, equitable, and safe schools are needed. Progress should be monitored relative to both the benchmarks that countries set, and countries must be held accountable for their commitments.

As we see the benefits of digital education and skills training programs, particularly, TVET (tech vocational education and training) for youth employment and gender parity in the trades, governments must ensure access to digital technology for all, in particular women and girls, youth, and persons with disability in low- and middle-income countries. Alternatives to formal school can be recognized and used to transform education systems.

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

Sustainable livelihoods approach is a holistic one that attempts to capture and provide a means of understanding the fundamental causes and dimensions of poverty. Fiscal redistribution through taxes and transfers that benefit low-income families, strong wage policies, and universal social protection systems and floors are essential to this approach. Investment in human capital, and in sustainable resilient infrastructure, as well as technology is required. Good governance policies and laws strengthened by partnerships between Member States, the private sector, and civil society will be required to combat corruption. National and global governance frameworks must realize the opportunities of open data for the public good. Member states must prioritize and fund education in all its forms and at all levels.

Financing for development is more critical now than ever. Developing countries are struggling with active Covid 19, chaos in the international economy and severe global inflation leading to rising food prices forcing starvation and food insecurity for millions. These are concerns that developing countries do not have the capacity individually to overcome. The United Nations can be a catalyst to focus on financing of initiatives to help the millions of people in these nations.

The UN must establish a Global Social Protection Fund, in order to achieve universal social protection systems and floors for the four billion people who are still excluded from social protection. A Global Fund for Social Protection can be a reality with official development assistance, increased international cooperation on taxation, and contributions from international financial institutions.

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

A disconnected and fragmented approach to social, economic and environmental policies has not produced the desired results toward poverty eradication, full employment and social inclusion.

The values and commitments underpinning the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD), held in March 1995 in Copenhagen continue to be valid for today. ‘The urgent need to address profound social problems, especially poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion, that affect every country’^[1] continue with us today. New priority needs are constantly emerging, most noticeable being the need for adequate housing and closing the digital divide, addressed by the Commission for Social Development in 2020 and 2021. Profound social problems have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the effect of neo-liberal economics, the development of autocratic governments, the destructive impacts of climate change, the failure of multilateralism and a growing distrust of institutions and governments.

The process towards a New Social Summit could provide the platform to gain perspective, balance and to regenerate momentum, forging a renewed vision and commitment ‘to achieve a higher quality of life for all people.’^[2] Elaborating a gender transformative new social contract rooted on SDG 8 and supporting the vision of the UN Secretary General’s Report “Our Common Agenda” and the UN Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection^[3] are immediate tools at hand to address both a values pillar and an actions pillar. We don’t want another new document, rather we demand engagement by all, for all, with all that commits to systemic and structural change, with human rights for the welfare of people and planet.

^[1] Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995 Article 2 <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N95/116/51/IMG/N9511651.pdf?OpenElement>

^[2] Ibid Article 6

^[3] A New Social Contract for a Gender Transformative Agenda - https://www.ilo.org/newyork/events-and-meetings/WCMS_850569/lang--en/index.ht