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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: poverty eradication**

Statement submitted by Al-Hakim Foundation, NGO 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.

* E/CN.5/2011/1.



Statement

1. The problem of poverty, with such associated phenomena as violence, ignorance, disease, family breakdown, and migration, constitutes a global threat and a major challenge to the ability of the international community to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, which all States resolved to reach by the target date of 2015.

2. After 10 years of striving to achieve those Goals, numerous individuals and social groups in many States around the world continue to sink under the burden of poverty and suffer from marginalization and deprivation of various kinds, including discrimination and lack of access to educational opportunities, housing, and health and other services.

3. At the present time, when the problem of poverty is being compounded by various international crises, including the global economic crisis and natural disasters resulting from climate change, all those problems constitute a real threat to global efforts to foster sustainable social development.

4. The global financial crisis has led to the creation of yet more barriers to the integration of millions of already deprived poor people around the world into their societies and access to low-cost, high-quality social services, including basic education, health care, safe water, sanitation and housing.

5. There is a disturbing increase in the number of newly poor and marginalized persons who have lost jobs or income as a result of the current crisis. Unemployment and job instability continue to rise, suggesting that millions more will be stripped of the social gains they have made and slide back onto the margins of society and below the poverty line.

6. Given that poverty has become one of the most dangerous threats being faced by the international community, effective solutions and strategies to eradicate it must be not only local but global. Governments, civil society and the private sector must all redouble their efforts both to create economic mechanisms to combat poverty, and to help to protect people from falling into poverty in the first place.

7. Government efforts to fight poverty must not be conducted in isolation from the efforts of society. By the same token, the direct responsibility of States for anti-poverty programmes does not exempt society and its various economic sectors from their social and humanitarian responsibilities with respect to that problem.

8. At a time when more assistance from developed countries is needed, donor Governments, in many cases Governments of the very countries where the current crisis originated, have even more reason to fulfil their obligation to provide assistance to developing and poor countries. At the same time, developing countries must improve their investment climates, implement further administrative and economic reforms, guarantee all their citizens access to such basic services as health care and education, and work to create comprehensive social safety nets for all their citizens without discrimination.

9. On the occasion of the forty-ninth session of the Commission for Social Development, the Al-Hakim Foundation, one of Iraq's largest civil society organizations, would like to take the opportunity provided by this important international gathering to reiterate the importance of focusing efforts and policies on

addressing the root causes of poverty. Proposed solutions and programmes to combat poverty should concentrate on the creation of real work opportunities rather than on short-term programmes which have limited prospects, and on internationally agreed measures to eradicate global poverty and deprivation, including the following:

(a) All Member States should fulfil their obligation to guarantee all individuals access to primary and secondary education, and should work to strengthen local institutions of higher learning and provide more opportunities for university education and vocational training at reasonable cost.

(b) Efforts should be made to ensure that people who live in poverty have access to production resources and social protection, with a view to enabling them to participate in society and restricting their exposure to exploitation.

(c) In partnership with civil society and the private sector, policies should be devised to allow young people to play an active role in the workforce through training and fellowship programmes. Programmes should be created to provide alternative educational opportunities for children and youth from poor and marginalized segments of society.

(d) Appropriate policies and frameworks should be put in place to ensure the integration and participation of persons with disabilities in economic, social and political life, and to address their health and education needs.

(e) Laws should be promulgated in order to curtail labour exploitation and usury, and to combat trafficking, prostitution and sexual exploitation. Such laws should include provisions based on principles of justice and human rights that criminalize the solicitation of trafficking and prostitution.

(f) Ethical economic principles and laws should be established in order to discourage speculation and encourage national Governments and private companies to adopt socially responsible policies that focus on the common good.

(h) With a view to strengthening the kind of social cohesion and solidarity that leads to social integration, efforts should be made to firmly establish the bases of social justice that are grounded on religious and moral teachings and values and the principles of human rights and human dignity.

10. The Al-Hakim Foundation also wishes to take this opportunity to urge the international community to consider taking guidance from the principles and legal regulations of the revealed religions when designing global anti-poverty strategies. An example would be the teachings of Islam on poverty, economic and social development, and social solidarity, which include the obligation of the rich to make charitable donations to help the poor, the prohibition of usury in order to prevent material exploitation, and numerous other laws designed to reinforce social solidarity. In Iraq, despite the national Government's efforts, many segments of society continue to suffer from poverty and unemployment because of rampant administrative corruption and the absence of a monitoring mechanism to ensure implementation of laws and fair distribution of opportunities for Government employment. The Iraqi Government must also make greater efforts to foster investment and strengthen the role of the private sector. Iraqi non-governmental organizations should be involved in poverty-reduction efforts, in respect of which have a lot to offer and could be an important partner. Since its foundation in 2003,

the Al-Hakim Foundation has implemented a number of programmes to combat poverty and assist marginalized segments of society. Its orphan sponsorship programme has benefited approximately 100,000 orphans from poor families. The Foundation has also implemented a number of programmes to help young people begin married life, including its collective marriage programme, which has provided material and financial support to thousands of young persons. The Foundation also supervises educational institutions that provide primary and secondary educational opportunities to thousands of students of both sexes.

11. We close by reiterating our appeal to the international community to increase its generous and much-appreciated efforts to assist Iraq and strengthen the role of Iraq's civil society organizations in efforts to eradicate poverty.
