



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 November 2013

Original: English

Commission for Social Development

Fifty-second session

11-21 February 2014

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:**

**priority theme: promoting empowerment of people in
achieving poverty eradication, social integration and
full employment and decent work for all**

Statement submitted by Caritas Internationalis, a non-governmental organization 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.



Statement

As a contribution to the discussion of the post-2015 development framework, we, Catholic-inspired organizations, reaffirm that the most effective route out of poverty and the global economic crisis is closely linked to the promotion of decent work and support for adequate social protection. Therefore, we confidently affirm that, as Pope John Paul II said, “human work is a key, probably the essential key, to the whole social question, if we try to see that question really from the point of view of man’s good”.

We acknowledge the challenges confronting humans living in a globalized world as they struggle to cope with limited resources, to develop and promote opportunities for sustainable livelihood and to build peace.

We believe that poverty eradication is the responsibility of, and requires concerted commitment from, Governments, employers’ and workers’ organizations, the private sector and civil society. Such commitments should be grounded in human dignity, human rights and responsibilities and solidarity.

With long and widespread experience in the private sector, as well as in practical programming and policymaking activity worldwide, from grass roots to global, often in direct partnership with States, international organizations and other civil society organizations, we offer the present paper as a contribution to the global reflection and discussion on the post-2015 development agenda.

We call upon and support the international community to renew the commitment of the entire human family to eradicating poverty through the promotion of decent work, good-quality jobs and social protection for all workers in all sectors of the economy, including the informal economy. We express particular concern about the situation of young people and migrants who, despite being an important part of the solution to the economic crisis, face more acute and difficult challenges in this regard.

We support the efforts of the International Labour Organization (ILO) to include the decent work agenda within the post-2015 framework, reflecting and animating the principles expressed in the Declaration concerning the aims and purposes of the International Labour Organization, adopted in 1944, which states that labour is not a commodity. Notably, this principle had already been articulated in 1931 by Pope Pius XI, who indicated that “the worker’s human dignity ... must be recognized” and that labour “cannot be bought and sold like a commodity”.

Promoting work as a means of eradicating poverty should not be viewed as an issue on which compromise can be reached. The quantity of jobs cannot be detrimental to the quality of jobs; work must be decent. For work to be decent, it must, according to Pope Benedict XVI, be “work that expresses the essential dignity of every man and woman in the context of their particular society”.

It is the duty and responsibility of all stakeholders involved in the world of work to cooperate towards achieving this goal with a true spirit of justice and fairness. When all stakeholders are engaged, this commitment is a source of hope.

However, in today’s globalized world, the work is increasingly informal, precarious and unprotected. Neither employment goals nor profit margins — for

employers, companies and economies — should be detrimental to working conditions. Human beings are not commodities.

We call upon all policymakers and enterprises, private and public, to consider the human dignity of workers, their talent, labour and families, enabling them to better fulfil their human vocation in their workplace.

We also call upon the international community to extend the four pillars of the ILO decent work agenda — employment, social protection, rights at work and social dialogue — to all workers, including those in the informal economy.

Extending social protection

All persons and organizations must assume their respective responsibilities in taking the action needed to protect and advance the common good. The extension of social protection is a fundamental means of accomplishing solidarity within and across society. Social protection mechanisms are essential to eradicating poverty, given that they protect workers and their families from the risks of life, such as unemployment and illness.

Weak social protection systems need consolidation. Social protection floors are defined by ILO as sets of basic social security guarantees that secure protection aimed at preventing or alleviating poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion (Recommendation No. 202 concerning national floors of social protection). They are powerful tools for expanding protection to cover all workers, families and communities. We call for special attention to be paid to decent work and social protection for youth and migrant workers.

Special concern for youth and employment

In today's world, young people, especially those living in rural areas and working in the informal economy, are facing difficulties in the world of work. The young generation has many professional skills. Many young people work without contracts, or with part-time contracts and precarious salaries. Even more are unemployed. As Pope John Paul II said, "it is particularly painful when [unemployment] especially affects young people, who after appropriate cultural, technical and professional preparation fail to find work, and see their sincere wish to work and their readiness to take on their own responsibility for the economic and social development of the community sadly frustrated". In addition, many young people pay very high fees for university education and vocational training, indebting themselves at a young age, yet jobs are not readily available.

Many of the new generation are losing hope for the future and thus risk the loss of fundamental values. As Pope Benedict XVI said, "many young people today seriously question whether life is something good, and have a hard time finding their way".

We call upon all Governments, employers' and workers' organizations and civil society organizations to work with youth movements and youth representatives to ensure a secure and meaningful future for the young generations. Young people should be ensured access to work and should enjoy decent working conditions and social protection, including when leaving school and entering the labour force. Careful analysis and reform of education systems should be carried out to ensure a smooth transition from school to work. Business leaders have an important

responsibility to engage with and accompany the younger generation in this transition.

Special concern for migrant workers and their families

In addition to being a right, migration is a natural human strategy to fight poverty. According to ILO, 90 per cent of today's international migrants, many of whom are young, are workers or family members of migrants who have moved principally for economic reasons, i.e., to work. Migrant work and earnings make a substantial contribution to positive development and the reduction of poverty, both in countries where migrants work and in countries of origin. Migration, as a positive driving force for social development, is a critical challenge and has yet to be addressed adequately.

However, many millions of migrants, moving within their regions or across continents, and including significant numbers of farm workers and domestic workers, whether documented or undocumented, are subjected to working conditions that are profoundly indecent.

We call upon Governments, employers' and workers' organizations and civil society to work together to ensure that all migrant workers and their families benefit from the same rights and assume the same responsibilities in the country where they live as any other worker. Specific attention is to be paid to fundamental principles and rights at work, as well as to the provision of adequate, fair and portable social protection, at levels that conform to universal human rights and international labour standards. Failure to do so undermines labour markets, public health, social cohesion and public order. Social protection for migrants means better protection for peaceful living together in society.

Note: The statement is endorsed by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council: International Catholic Migration Commission, International Young Christian Workers, International Kolping Society, Pax Romana and World Movement of Christian Workers.