



## Economic and Social Council

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### 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 World Igbo Congress, 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

### Introduction

World Igbo Congress, an organization dedicated to the unification of the Igbo people of Nigeria and to the promotion of their welfare, with a focus on their common needs, welcomes the fifty-second session of the Commission for Social Development. World Igbo Congress considered the priority theme, “Promoting empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all”, with great concern for the world’s populations, especially in developing countries, in general and the Igbo people in particular.

Since its formation, World Igbo Congress has promoted the issues concerning the Igbo people and significantly facilitated initiatives and campaigns on:

(a) Rights and justice for women and girls within the seven Igbo-speaking states of Nigeria and in the Nigerian diaspora. In this regard, World Igbo Congress has called the attention of the governments of the Igbo-speaking states (south-eastern and southern geopolitical zones), traditional rulers and legislators to the importance of recognizing the full realization of Igbo women’s rights — economic, social, health, cultural, legislative and civic — in all spheres of human endeavour within the Igbo race;

(b) Good governance as a means of better resource management and job creation for the Igbo people, especially within the local government areas. In this regard, World Igbo Congress has collaborated with civil society, including trade unions and youth organizations, to keep the governments of Igbo states in check;

(c) Resuscitation of technical and vocational education in the area as a means of engaging young people and promoting employment in multifaceted industries. To this end, World Igbo Congress is collaborating with tertiary institutions in the area to promote software and spare parts design to feed the agricultural, transportation, culinary industry and health sectors and provide employment;

(d) Advocacy for justice for the Igbo, who are itinerant businesspeople and astute entrepreneurs but who are often exposed to ethnic rivalry in their diverse places of abode. To this end, World Igbo Congress has viewed the activities of Boko Haram, which are directed mostly to the Christian Igbo. World Igbo Congress is currently working with the Human Rights Council to give justice to the afflicted Igbo.

Regarding the eight Millennium Development Goals and the related challenges and achievements, World Igbo Congress notes with great concern that, although successes have been achieved, challenges hinged on human understanding, culture and economic barriers still stand in the way of full employment for all. Women, girls and youth, who are harbingers of the successes and challenges related to these Goals, as well as the rural populations, remain the target groups of World Igbo Congress.

## Review of the Millennium Development Goals

Reports have indicated that:

- **Goal 1.** Women have been empowered with resources to overcome poverty. There is, however, an increased percentage of women globally who are unemployed.
- **Goal 2.** Literacy rates have increased, with more women achieving education.
- **Goal 3.** Various initiatives and campaigns have been put in place to promote gender equality, employment and empowerment.
- **Goal 4.** Globally, there are efforts committed to the reduction of child mortality rates.
- **Goal 5.** There is improved access to reproductive health care, including with regard to unmet needs and family planning, with a reduction in maternal mortality and an improved number of skilled health workers.
- **Goal 6.** Knowledge about HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis prevention, treatment and management has increased.
- **Goal 7.** Sustainable development programmes and principles have been integrated into national policies, although they remain skewed in certain economies, especially with the complication of ethnic rivalries and religious bigotry.
- **Goal 8.** Global interests in the market, trade, technologies and information, as well as unemployment issues, have been the focus of various forms of global partnerships.

Despite these successes, the World Igbo Congress notes that the rates of achievement of these goals have been very low in the grass-roots rural populations in the Igbo areas of Nigeria. These people are still subject to the fallout from extreme poverty inflicted by the Nigerian civil war. School dropout rates and the attendant sex business and disease transmission (including HIV/AIDS) are on the rise. School leavers cannot find jobs. Rural women still die in childbirth, as these communities lack skilled health workers and resources. World Igbo Congress believes in the reported achievements since the Millennium Development Goals began in 2000, but the impact of the successes of these Goals has yet to reach these people. People in the Igbo-speaking states are exposed to hardship, poor environmental health situations, early marriages, the lack of infrastructure for sustainable growth and the absence of opportunity for partnerships in their skill areas. A good percentage of the rural populace with an interest in science and technology are deprived because of poverty and ethnic affiliations. This hinders sustainable development and impinges on their future economic well-being, human rights and employment.

## Human rights and the Millennium Development Goals

Since their establishment in 2000, the Millennium Development Goals have caused dramatic global changes involving pertinent issues that affect human life. However, the global financial crisis has led to the erosion of economic, social and human rights in the world. As a result of the existing crisis, in most parts of the world, especially in rural communities, women and girls from low-income families

depend on support services where they exist but have to find other alternatives where such support services and food assistance strategies do not exist in order to survive. Governments have failed to implement key regulations and institutions, and this has affected women's and girls' rights and human rights obligations. The Igbo experience marginalization and discrimination and are more vulnerable to exploitation and challenges to their human rights. The Millennium Development Goals offer methods through which relevant development strategies for women, girls and rural populations, including basic education, gender equality and women's empowerment, women's health and women's participation in decision, legislation and leadership roles, are implemented. Advancing the rights of women, girls and the rural Igbo population will advance humanity.

### **Post-2015 sustainable development agenda**

A critical review of the Millennium Development Goals posits that concerns regarding the Igbo have not been addressed, especially those regarding women and girls in rural settings. The Igbo in the communities of the Igbo-speaking states of Nigeria experience the impact of the overall weakness of the Goals. With regard to "Leave no one behind", one of the five transformative shifts identified in the report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, contributions from Governments, the international community, civil society and the private sector should be put in place to ensure that the concerns of every ethnic group are made a priority. Positive efforts should be made to accelerate action and scale up what works from the lessons learned on the Millennium Development Goals, with a focus on reducing inequalities on many fronts, such as improving food security, maternal health, water and sanitation, rural development, nutrition education, employment, basic services, economic opportunities and decision-making at all levels.

### **Resolutions**

Having reviewed the outcome of the fifty-first session of the Commission for Social Development and considered the priority theme for the fifty-second session, World Igbo Congress calls upon the Bureau of the fifty-second session and Member States to resolve as follows:

- Women, girls and all ethnic groups should be accorded respect, protection and full human rights.
- The Igbo in the rural communities and in vulnerable situations should be provided with adequate resources for their existence and accorded full human rights.
- The fifty-second session should include in its outcome document the concerns of the "forgotten" ethnic groups, such as the poor rural Igbo in the seven states in the south-eastern and southern geopolitical zones of Nigeria, for inclusion in the post-2015 agenda.
- Cultural policies impinging on the communal rights of the Igbo should be brought to the table, in accordance with respect for their human rights, security and protection.

- Attention should be given to rural Igbo in the field of technology and vocational education and opportunities created for them to explore their potential in middle-level manpower development.
  - Member States should be informed of the need to establish Millennium Development Goals awareness centres in rural communities to ensure adequate outreach on the mission of the Goals for women, girls and rural populations.
  - There should be significant measures to promote women's and rural empowerment in the labour market and labour rights to encourage positive earnings.
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