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### Commission for Social Development

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

### **Statement submitted by Human Rights National Circle, a non-governmental organization in special 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.

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\* E/CN.5/2013/L.2.



## Statement

For the human rights organization Human Rights National Circle, the promotion of empowerment of people in achieving the eradication of poverty and extreme poverty is a necessity for African countries, since it offers the possibility of full, decent employment under leaders who care about the future and destiny of their people. Self-employment is the only way to fight poverty and extreme poverty. Besides awareness-raising, outreach and guidance towards activities that promote empowerment, there must also be interaction, common efforts, complementarity and interdependence between the leaders and the people of each African country in promoting empowerment. Poverty, extreme poverty and the lack of decent jobs are linked to the total absence of good governance.

Good governance is a pre-condition for eliminating poverty and extreme poverty in Africa. For our organization, bad governance is marked by a lack of democracy and by the prevalence of injustice and inequality. It encourages dictatorship, autocracy, fiscal mismanagement, misappropriation of public funds – in brief, economic crimes – as we have observed in our research in African countries. The transfer of Africa's wealth to tax havens by reckless, irresponsible leaders acts against the empowerment of people and prevents Africans from attaining the Millennium Development Goals. Thus, empowerment in achieving poverty eradication is becoming impossible. The main objective of State interventionism in African countries is to hurt the self-employed. Some African leaders, out of self-interest, impose exorbitant taxes on individual entrepreneurs. Today, the informal sectors in African countries are mainly composed of people earning a subsistence living, and this work helps to promote individual empowerment in one way or another. However, African Governments discourage such activities, forcing people into unemployment and extreme poverty.

Here at the beginning of the twenty-first century in Africa, where work is an exception and unemployment is the rule, the informal sector should be encouraged, so as to eradicate poverty among people who have no work to do. For the Human Rights National Circle, the informal sector should therefore be supported, since independent work in that sector is inevitable in any case and can certainly help empower people and contribute to poverty reduction. The Arab Spring was triggered in Tunisia by the prohibition of Mohamed Bouazizi's activities in the informal sector. The interference of barely credible African States that show no signs of good political, economic, social or cultural governance bogs down the whole system; hence the bankruptcy and failures caused by Governments lacking in credibility have an impact on all economic sectors. In the African leaders' quest for unlawful, immoral self-enrichment, the whole society ends up in complete ruin; there is no way to promote empowerment of people in Africa by taking isolated actions, since the State influences all sectors of activity. The international community, donors and other economic stakeholders should be made to understand that poverty eradication through self-employment can never be implemented in countries where financial corruption takes place openly and shamelessly, as our surveys and investigations have shown in more than 87 per cent of African countries.

It is claimed that Africa has recorded 6 per cent growth in recent years; however, it goes without saying that this growth has had no influence whatsoever on the standard of living of its inhabitants or on the promotion of the empowerment of people. On the contrary, poverty and extreme poverty are on the rise. Infant

mortality has increased, and life expectancy has fallen to 30 years of age. In the poorly governed countries of Africa, 98 per cent of the wealth is owned and used by less than 0.5 per cent of the population. Fewer than 5 per cent of the people essentially hold all the power, and thus constitute the ruling class.

Empowerment of people is the best goal for African development, but the African countries – not to be pessimistic – will never be able to achieve it, simply because of bad political, economic, social and cultural governance practices on the part of their leaders.

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