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Social development: implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

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

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 64/135 on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. The report provides an overview of discussions held by the Commission for Social Development during its forty-eighth session on the priority theme “Social integration”. It also highlights the deliberations of the Commission with regard to the fifteenth anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development and the policy responses on employment and the social consequences of the financial and economic crises, including its gender dimension. It concludes with recommendations arising from the discussions of the Commission.

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I. Introduction

1. In resolution 64/135, the General Assembly reaffirmed the primary responsibility of the Commission for Social Development for the follow-up and review of the World Summit for Social Development and the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. In accordance with that mandate, the Commission for Social Development adopted social integration as the priority theme for discussion at its 2009-2010 review and policy sessions.

2. At the World Summit, held in Copenhagen in 1995, Member States formulated a comprehensive vision of social development, aimed at creating a society for all. Social integration was an essential part of that vision, seen as a process of building values and institutions indispensable for the creation of an inclusive society in which all can exercise their rights and responsibilities.

3. Following the World Summit, the Commission for Social Development discussed social integration at its thirty-sixth session in February 1998 and formulated agreed conclusions on promoting social integration and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons. In its subsequent sessions, the Commission mainly looked at social integration issues from the perspective of group-specific mandates elaborated following the Summit. Social integration was put back on the agenda of the Commission in 2009.

4. The focus of the Commission at its 2009-2010 review and policy sessions on the promotion of social integration, taking into account the interlinkages among the three development pillars of social integration, poverty eradication and full employment, and decent work for all offered a valuable opportunity to set a new course of action for advancing social integration at the national and international levels. At the conclusion of the policy session, held in February 2010, the Commission adopted the first resolution on promoting social integration since the 1995 Summit.

5. At its forty-eighth session, the Commission held a high-level panel discussion to mark the fifteenth anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development. Echoing the concerns expressed by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/135, the Commission discussed the impact on social development of the world financial and economic crisis, and continuing food insecurity and climate change. It focused on the policy responses on employment and the social consequences of the financial and economic crises, including its gender dimension, under the item on emerging issues.

6. The present report outlines the main points of the policy discussion of the Commission on social integration, and highlights the issues raised during the high-level panel discussion on the fifteenth anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development. The report also summarizes the Commission's discussion of the social consequences of the financial and economic crises, and concludes with a set of recommendations on advancing social integration.

II. Review of the substantive discussions of the Commission for Social Development at its forty-eighth session

A. Social integration

7. In the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action¹ social integration was recognized as both a goal and an overall framework to advance social development and social policymaking. Member States made a commitment to promote social integration through fostering inclusive societies that are stable, safe, harmonious, peaceful, just and tolerant, and that respect diversity, equality of opportunity and the participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons. This commitment, however, remains elusive and difficult to attain as the complex nature of the social integration concept renders it difficult to operationalize and translate it into policy-oriented actions.

8. Social integration policies and programmes have mainly focused on the advancement of a number of social groups, such as older persons, youth, persons with disabilities and indigenous people. For the most part, however, no overall framework for advancing social integration has been developed at the national or international level.

9. Moreover, although long-held assumptions that economic growth and market expansion will automatically lead to advancing social development for all have been disproved, little has been done to promote inclusive economic growth. Such growth, although necessary for social development in general and social integration in particular, will not bring about social progress and more cohesive societies if it is not accompanied by policies aimed at removing the social, cultural and political barriers that prevent many groups and individuals from sharing in its benefits.

10. In addition, significant obstacles to social integration remain widespread and pervasive. In developing countries, poverty, underemployment and lack of access to basic services, coupled with inequality, marginalization, conflict, instability and discrimination, continue to impede progress towards social integration. In many developed countries, sociodemographic changes, combined with the rising inequality and marginalization of many groups, including migrants, continue to prevent the achievement of social integration.

11. Poverty continues to be a major obstacle to social integration. Often equated with exclusion, poverty goes beyond the lack of adequate income and encompasses issues of opportunities, empowerment, capabilities and security. People living in poverty are truly excluded from full participation in society.

12. Unemployment remains a major challenge to the social integration of many individuals and groups. Lack or loss of a job often means long-term unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. Unemployed individuals not only lose a source of income but also the basis for active social interaction, participation and skills development.

13. Discrimination continues to be the primary impediment to social integration and full participation in the life of a society in which individuals and groups are

¹ *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

denied their human rights and lack access to basic services provided by the State. Gender discrimination continues to be one of the most pervasive and prevalent forms of institutionalized exclusion and inequality. Underrepresentation of women at the political, social and economic levels of decision-making in many societies undermines efforts to create a society for all as well.

Policies for the promotion of social integration: general principles

14. Social integration policies and strategies have to be tailored to address the challenges and obstacles specific to each country. However, a few general principles do apply. Fundamental among them is the realization that advancing social integration goes beyond group-specific mandates and should be mainstreamed in overall policymaking.

15. Also critical is the adoption of a coherent approach to economic and social policymaking. Current economic policies are often implemented with a disregard for their social consequences, resulting in greater social disparities and increasing inequality.

16. Promotion of social integration further rests on embracing inclusive, participatory and accountable policymaking. Governments should encourage and facilitate the active engagement of communities and social groups in the design, monitoring and implementing of social integration policies. Promoting collaboration among all stakeholders is essential. Vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and individuals should be able to express their needs and concerns, and their perspectives must be reflected in all stages of development strategies.

17. Poverty reduction and social integration require investment in human capital development, especially in education and health. In this regard, it is important to enhance the quality of education and not just focus on increasing the enrolment rate.

18. Labour market and decent work policies play a critical role in achieving social inclusion through the promotion of non-discrimination in employment, equality of treatment, provision of education and training, and the inclusion in labour markets of groups at risk of discrimination. More emphasis on the acquisition of job and life skills, as well as the updating of those skills throughout the life cycle, is needed. Also critical to social integration and poverty eradication is social protection, which contributes to reducing poverty and enhancing equity and cohesion in society.

19. Social integration goes hand in hand with advancing human rights, achieving participation, transparency and accountability in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of policies. It also requires institutional capacity-building, development of evaluation frameworks and creation of strong partnerships.

Human rights framework

20. Social integration lies at the core of human development, which may be defined as the progressive realization of people's social, civil, political, economic and cultural rights. Development is about expanding people's choices, freedoms and capabilities, so that they can fully participate in all aspects of the life of a society and influence the decisions that affect their lives.

21. Although most societies created legal frameworks that uphold the basic premise of equality and non-discrimination, discriminatory attitudes often prevail

and are difficult to eliminate. Consequently, special anti-discriminatory measures may be needed to ensure equality for marginalized individuals and social groups, depending on the national context.

22. It is especially important to undertake efforts to ensure equality of opportunity for those who are excluded, disadvantaged or vulnerable, and to remove not only the legal but also the social, economic, cultural and political barriers to their participation. Importantly, special measures to fight discrimination not only advance social integration but also contribute to the success of poverty eradication efforts, helping those who suffer from discrimination to become fully productive citizens.

23. A society must be equipped with institutional mechanisms that will accommodate differences, respect diversity, respect the principle of equality, allow participation and provide opportunities for all people, regardless of their backgrounds. To help with this task, most countries have established national human rights institutions, such as human rights commissions and ombudsmen. They often protect the rights of ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, refugees, women or children and may have a broader mandate of training and education in human rights. Policies should include the strengthening of such institutions.

24. Special emphasis on civic education is needed so that citizens are informed of their rights and responsibilities. Innovative ways to create opportunities for the meaningful engagement of members of different communities in order to promote dialogue and mutual understanding among diverse members of societies are of special importance as well.

25. To advance gender equality, special measures to increase women's participation in the political life of countries, such as the establishment of quotas for women in parliament, may contribute to the greater social inclusion of women. In several countries, the representation of women in decision-making bodies is already a key measure of social integration. Similarly, such positive discrimination may help other marginalized groups. Some countries pursue affirmative action policies for indigenous peoples or ethnic minorities, for instance, in connection with access to education and employment. Such measures may be necessary to level out historical injustices and contribute to social integration.

Participation, transparency and accountability

26. Achieving the goal of social integration and inclusion requires the broad-based participation and engagement of diverse groups. Participation goes beyond mere representation and consultation to embrace active voices in decision-making and the creation of an environment conducive to equal partnership among all social actors, in particular socially excluded or disadvantaged groups and individuals. It also fosters collaboration and promotes consensus-building and solidarity. Encouraging tolerance for diversity and mutual respect while discouraging negative discrimination are sine qua non for participation. To remove the barriers that prevent various groups from fully participating in society, it is necessary to view their respective circumstances.

27. Another critical aspect of participation and social inclusion is to encourage civic engagement by democratizing access to public information and engaging marginalized groups in public, parliamentary and civil society forums. Transparency and participation are mutually reinforcing.

28. Transparent and accountable policymaking requires broad-based participation. Thus, institutions and mechanisms that promote people's active participation should be put in place to ensure transparent and accountable monitoring and evaluation. This includes the development of more effective and participatory monitoring processes to identify the forms and drivers of exclusion. Data gathering of quantitative and qualitative indicators of inclusion could lead to greater identification and monitoring of the individuals and communities vulnerable to exclusion. This would also contribute to institutional strengthening and enhancing capacity to develop inclusive policy and monitor outcomes.

Institutional capacity-building, evaluation frameworks and partnerships

29. The Copenhagen Programme of Action called for the creation of social institutions and mechanisms which are accessible to people and responsive to their needs. Such institutions and mechanisms should empower the local governance structure and communities and encourage the building of partnerships between Government and local stakeholders. National and local capacity-building also consists of the compilation of good practices, information-sharing, developing financial capability, creating a knowledge base and strengthening coordination across local, national, regional and international agencies.

30. Governments should identify clear social inclusion objectives and develop concrete evaluation frameworks for their implementation. Specific social inclusion benchmarks and indicators are needed to effectively monitor policies, assess their outcomes and redirect policies when necessary. Monitoring and reporting, on a regular basis, on the progress made and shortcomings in respect of specific policies, are important for enhancing transparency and accountability.

31. The gap between policy and practice has often been magnified by inadequate technical skills. Further attention should be paid to the training of government officials at the national and local levels with a view to strengthening their capacity to design and implement, as well as monitor and evaluate, effective strategies for social inclusion.

32. Of equal importance is community capacity-building which should be recognized as a principal strategy for stimulating local participation and improving the engagement of local communities eager to resolve local problems and devise appropriate solutions. Capacity-building programmes should be designed to reach women, youth, older persons, people living in poverty, and other disadvantaged and marginalized populations in order to assist in skills building.

33. While the responsibility and coordinated initiatives to promote social integration lie with national Governments, advancing social integration at the local level requires sustained, cooperative action and true partnerships among key stakeholders, including social partners, civil society, non-profit entities and the private sector. Efforts should be made to create a common vision for social integration among all stakeholders in order to ensure broad-based ownership of national development agendas.

34. Global cooperation for social integration entails the exchange of views and sharing of information on good policies and practices for mainstreaming social inclusion in social and economic policies at the national, regional and international levels. The United Nations should facilitate such exchange, especially through the Commission for Social Development.

35. The support that a conducive international environment and enhanced international cooperation can provide to national efforts towards promoting social integration cannot be underestimated and requires the fulfilment of commitments to internationally agreed targets and goals for official development assistance, debt relief, market access, capacity-building and technical support for developing countries. To help in capacity-building, resources could be provided for creating participatory social integration institutions, such as community-based social inclusion units responsible for the development and implementation of social integration policies. However, international assistance must not be accompanied by onerous conditionalities that restrict the policy space of the national Governments.

Investment in social protection

36. Social protection has proved to be an effective instrument for reducing the risk of social exclusion and poverty and advancing social integration. It is an essential tool for promoting more equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth; it promotes the basic tenets of social integration: social justice and intergenerational solidarity. Innovative social protection interventions should meet basic needs, facilitate productive engagement in economic activities, and expand livelihood opportunities for the excluded and most marginalized. There is a growing consensus about the need for greater universalism and inclusivity in the provision of social protection. Nevertheless, depending on the national context, targeted social protection schemes can be effective in the fight against poverty and inequality. As such, conditional cash transfer initiatives, including Bolsa Familia in Brazil, Oportunidades in Mexico or Solidario in Chile, which target families living in poverty, have resulted in improved outcomes for children, including better nutrition, school attendance and reduced child labour.

37. The importance of social protection becomes even more apparent in times of economic and social crises, when meeting the basic needs of the most vulnerable helps to shelter them from the worst impact of economic instability. In fact, social protection has emerged as an important framework for reducing poverty and vulnerability during the current crises and provides an opportunity to address the shortcomings of existing social and economic systems.

38. While formulating and implementing social protection programmes and policies, due attention should be given to the promotion of the well-being of families, the first to provide education in social integration. Although the State has assumed greater responsibility for social protection, families continue to provide many social protection functions, such as caring for the young and older family members. It has been increasingly recognized that to maintain this basic social protection role, families need support. Thus, family-based cash transfers have been introduced in Latin America and several African countries in support of intergenerational care relating to HIV and AIDS. More efforts are needed in support of single-parent families raising children, who are often the most vulnerable to poverty and exclusion.

Regional initiatives

39. In its Social Agenda 2005-2010, the European Union has focused on the creation of decent jobs and equal opportunities for all as a means of achieving social inclusion. The European Parliament and the European Council designated 2010 the

European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. The objectives of the Year include highlighting the concerns and needs of people living in poverty, raising public awareness about these issues and renewing the political commitment of the member States of the European Union to combat poverty and social exclusion. Special attention is given to recognizing the rights of people living in poverty and social exclusion and enabling them to live in dignity and participate in all aspects of societal life. Shared responsibility and participation through increasing the public ownership of social inclusion policies is emphasized as well. Such ownership implies that everyone is responsible for tackling poverty and that all will benefit from its eradication. The European Union is also revising its Lisbon Strategy, which will be succeeded by the Europe 2020 strategy which stresses sustainable and inclusive growth, innovation, better use of knowledge, raising participation in the labour market, encouraging the acquisition of skills, and the fight against poverty.

40. The African Common Position on Social Integration adopted by the African Union Ministers in charge of social development in October 2008, highlights the importance of promoting social integration in the African region. Social cohesion in Africa relies on universal access to education, skills development, health care, shelter, rural and urban development, environmental protection, social security, food, nutrition and water. The African Common Position calls for the reduction of political, economic and social inequalities, closing the gaps between existing exclusion and integration, creating equal opportunities, and undertaking measures at the national, regional, and international levels to achieve a more stable and safe society for all. Such measures include improving public administration and developing local structures to involve communities and civil society in the design of projects. There is also an urgent need to integrate marginalized and vulnerable groups in poverty reduction strategies and other development programmes.

41. The Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) recently identified pillars of development towards formulating a social action strategic plan. The pillars include the fight against hunger, poverty and social inequalities, as well as citizenship, participation, human rights and diversity, health, education, culture and the creation of productive jobs and decent work.

B. Fifteenth anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development

42. Fifteen years ago the World Summit for Social Development marked a turning point in development thinking. It put forward a comprehensive framework to promote social development by placing people at the centre of development efforts, with the ultimate aim of building more inclusive, safe, stable and just societies. The three major goals of the Summit — eradication of poverty, promotion of full and productive employment, and social integration — remain the key priority areas of social development. They are critical to the attainment of all internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

43. Some progress has been made over the past 15 years with regard to promoting the inclusion of, and expanded social protection for, social groups. Several group-specific mandates and instruments have been developed. New priority areas were established under the World Programme of Action for Youth (General Assembly resolutions 50/81, annex, and 62/126, annex). The Madrid International Plan of

Action on Ageing² recommended strategies for the inclusion of older persons into all facets of society. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (General Assembly resolution 61/295, annex) emphasized the right of indigenous populations to promote their own development and to have a say in decisions affecting them. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (General Assembly resolution 61/106, annex) has brought global recognition of the challenges faced by those with disabilities. All of those instruments offered guidelines on how to promote social integration by improving the situation of social groups and increasing their participation in society. Yet, while group-specific policy instruments have ensured advances on some fronts, the social inclusion of marginalized groups into wider policy initiatives and society remains a challenge.

44. Although the world is still a long way from achieving the broader commitments made at Copenhagen, the Millennium Development Goals framework has brought increased attention to poverty reduction, access to health care and education, and a focus on full employment. This has led to positive action towards more inclusive societies. Significant progress has been achieved in some areas, such as primary school enrolment and gender equality. Advancements in other areas, such as reducing poverty and inequality, and creating productive employment and decent work for all have been disappointing, due in some part to lesser attention given to promoting social integration.

45. Progress in meeting the commitments of the Summit also varies across regions of the world despite the significant importance given to the regional implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action. Regional strategies have been formulated within the framework of the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, 2010. Regional frameworks for youth and older persons have been established as well.

46. Undeniably, the challenges to achieving social development remain daunting. The global economic and financial crisis, energy crisis, world food crisis and continuing food insecurity have had serious consequences for social development and have had a negative impact on the progress made in achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The crises have also further reduced the policy space for national action.

47. In the light of the mixed progress towards the achievement of social development goals and the adverse social impacts of multiple crises, the implementation of the commitments made at the Summit becomes even more urgent and relevant than ever before.

48. The Commission for Social Development remains the key forum for coordinating international efforts to advance social development. As such, it should continue to play a crucial role in further enhancing the global dialogue on social development issues, as well as placing social integration high on the agenda for development with a view to making tangible progress towards fulfilment of the Copenhagen commitments and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

49. The high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to be held in September 2010 to review progress in the achievement of the Millennium

² *Report of the World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 8-12 April 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.IV.4), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

Development Goals presents an opportunity to renew the commitment to poverty eradication, productive employment creation, and social integration. Many of the Millennium Development Goals were built on, and carry forward the thrust of, the Copenhagen Declaration and it would be difficult to achieve them without pursuing the objective of creating a society for all. The high-level plenary meeting should emphasize the importance of building a society for all that is stable, safe, harmonious, peaceful and just. Governments should be further encouraged to pursue socially inclusive policies. Such policies not only support pro-poor growth and development but also help to prevent social conflict and political instability, creating favourable conditions for development and the achievement of the Goals.

C. Social consequences of the financial and economic crises and policy responses

50. With major declines in gross domestic product in both developed and developing countries, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat estimates that, in 2009, between 47 and 84 million more people remained poor or fell into poverty than would have been the case if the crisis had not hit.³ Estimates of the impact of the crisis on child health and mortality are diverse, but they all point to a significant increase in the number of children dying.⁴ Hunger is also rising across the developing world. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the number of people suffering from malnutrition is expected to reach a historical peak of 1 billion in 2009.⁵

51. The crisis has led to sharp falls in employment and rapid increases in unemployment. The effects on unemployment showed much variance across countries; however, the number of unemployed people worldwide rose by over 34 million. In addition, International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates show the number of working poor to have increased by 215 million.⁶ Joblessness is likely to continue well into the next decade despite initial signs of recovery. Depending on the scope of policies to counteract the job shortfall, from four to five years might be

³ The estimates represent the shortfall in poverty reduction caused by the drop in per capita income growth in 2009 as compared to average growth during the period 2004-2007 (which would lead to an increase of 84 million in the number of poor) and to growth observed in 2008 (which would lead to an increase of 47 million poor). For calculation purposes, it was assumed that income distribution would stay constant in all countries (see *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2010* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.II.C.2)). According to World Bank estimates, the reverberation of the crisis could reduce developing country growth by between 0.2 and 0.7 per cent for five to seven years; as a result, by 2020, the number of people living in poverty could increase by as much as 79 million (see World Bank, *Global Economic Prospects Summer 2010: Fiscal Headwinds and Recovery* (Washington, D.C., 2010)).

⁴ One estimate suggests that the crisis will result in an additional 200,000 to 400,000 infant deaths per year between 2009 and 2015 (see World Bank, "The impact of the financial crisis on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals in human development", World Bank Internal Policy Note, 2009). In sub-Saharan Africa, the number of additional infant deaths is estimated at between 30,000 and 50,000 in 2009 (see Jed Friedman and Norbert Schady, "How many more infants are likely to die in Africa as a result of the global financial crisis?", World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 5023, August 2009).

⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2009* (Rome, 2009).

⁶ International Labour Organization, *Global Employment Trends*, January 2010 (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2010).

needed before labour market conditions similar to the pre-crisis situation are re-established.⁷

52. The impact of global crises has been further compounded by increases in food prices and falls in remittances, often used to obtain better nutrition. Although world food prices are now lower after peaking in 2008, they are still higher than before, resulting in families having to make cuts in nourishment. The negative consequences of such cuts on children's health may well extend into the future.

53. Disadvantaged social groups, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, older people, indigenous peoples and migrants have been hit particularly hard by the crises. A significant increase in unemployment remains a major concern given that exclusion from the labour market is detrimental to individuals and has long-term negative effects on society as a whole. This reality is especially striking for young people. Prior to the crisis, young people were already 2.8 times more likely to be unemployed than adults. Between 2008 and 2009, the number of unemployed youth increased by 8.5 million, the greatest year-on-year increase in at least 10 years. In addition, young people are becoming increasingly discouraged, showing the greatest decrease in participation rates across age groups.⁸

54. The impact of the crises on women is of major concern as women are experiencing high levels of unemployment, even higher than men in many export-oriented developing countries. Moreover, compared to their male counterparts, a higher percentage of women work in vulnerable employment, which is less covered by social safety nets and is more vulnerable to economic downturns. In the household, women often bear the brunt of a crisis and the consequent cutbacks in household budgets and consumption as they shoulder the burdens of increased unpaid housework. Reductions in social spending also tend to disproportionately affect the access of women and girls to health and education. Moreover, the design and delivery of economic stimulus packages have not always taken into account the differentiated impact of these programmes on women. That is why gender equality in the labour market should be a priority for Governments and why domestic laws and regulations need to be strengthened to ensure the access of women to jobs, equal pay, family support policies and female entrepreneurship.

55. The crises have also led to higher demand for social services and assistance, but with the decline in government revenues, public expenditure on social protection faces tight budget constraints. This is likely to result in increasing inequality, as the impacts of the crisis and cuts in public expenditure would disproportionately affect disadvantaged social groups and the low-income population, in particular women. Their situation requires immediate attention, especially in providing access to employment, education and social security benefits.

56. To compound the effects of the global crises, the world is also facing climate change risks. Renewable energy solutions are needed to mitigate climate change and to create a sustainable development pathway. In this regard, relying on markets alone is unlikely to bring the necessary change, and a public investment-led approach to address climate change, employment creation and infrastructure development should be pursued.

⁷ *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2010: Update as of mid-2010*. Available from www.un.org/esa/policy/wess/wesp2010files/wesp10update.pdf (accessed on 30 July 2010).

⁸ International Labour Organization, 2010.

National policy responses

57. In response to the crises, developed countries have put together financial rescue packages, eased monetary policies and initiated fiscal measures to stimulate demand and address employment and social protection concerns. Most countries have focused on employment preservation and adopted countercyclical policies to prevent steep output declines that would lead to severe job losses. Some developing countries also took steps to counter the impact of the global financial and economic crisis, including measures to strengthen social protection systems to prevent poverty and to stabilize consumption.

58. While large economies and countries with fiscal resources have taken fiscal stimulus measures, poor economies in need of such steps to create jobs and protect the poor were not able to do so due to budgetary constraints or lack of policy space. A much more coordinated economic recovery would have resulted in benefits for all countries, including the least developed. To compound the situation, international assistance has been limited and is often accompanied by conditionalities that are procyclical in nature, thereby undermining recovery efforts.⁹

59. Developing countries, based on their available resources, also implemented a set of crisis response strategies. Many countries took measures to ease the burden on the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups through increased spending on social safety net programmes. Some countries provided job and skills training and job placement programmes to unemployed persons and laid-off employees. Other measures included subsidizing the price of basic food, protecting wages in some sectors, and improving access to education and health services. Several countries adopted fiscal stimulus measures to create jobs through investment in infrastructure projects, and expanded the coverage of their anti-poverty programmes.

60. It is clear that the composition of stimulus packages should be designed to spread the benefits to the most vulnerable. In order to effectively deal with current and future crises, there is a need to invest in physical infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, education, health and social sectors.

61. Finally, to address the negative impact of crises, there is principally a need for a systemic reform agenda which will ensure macrofinancial stability with countercyclical macroeconomic policies and prudential risk management, including capital controls. It is equally important to promote growth that focuses on output and employment creation and ensures an inclusive financial system.

United Nations system-wide response

62. New international frameworks and initiatives have emerged in response to the global crises. In 2009, the United Nations System Chief Executive Board for Coordination endorsed a comprehensive framework consisting of nine joint crisis initiatives covering issues ranging from food security and a greener economy to the Global Jobs Pact, and a social protection floor.

⁹ A recent study by the United Nations Children's Fund found that in 57 of the 86 countries reviewed, the International Monetary Fund had recommended contractions in total public expenditure, as well as in crucial social expenditure (United Nations Children's Fund, "Prioritizing expenditures for a recovery with human face", Social and Economic Policy Working Briefs, April 2010).

63. The Global Jobs Pact is founded on the four cross-cutting pillars of employment, social protection, labour standards and social dialogue. It focuses on boosting employment, production and investment and the promotion of decent work for all. Further, it highlights that recovery packages should consider the gender dimension of the economic crisis and integrate gender equality into all response measures.

64. The Social Protection Floor initiative aims to ensure access to basic social services and the empowerment and protection of the poor and vulnerable. This initiative is important not only for human dignity but for human resources development, economic growth, labour market efficiency, poverty reduction and building social cohesion. It would make a significant contribution to facilitating social integration by helping to lift people out of extreme poverty. Governments should commit themselves to establishing a social protection floor consisting of a set of core components, including education, health care, basic services and social transfers, to protect people during the crisis and thereafter.

65. The global financial and economic crises, volatile food and energy prices, and climate change pose serious challenges for social development and highlight the importance of social integration and its role in promoting a more integrated, comprehensive, consistent and more inclusive approach to development. There is a growing recognition that socially and environmentally sustainable policies are needed to promote social justice, economic recovery and growth with an overall objective of creating “a society for all”.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

66. The main tenets of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, to put people at the centre of development and to create a society for all, remain as valid as they were 15 years ago. The policies to achieve the three pillars of social development, namely, poverty eradication, full employment and social integration, are intertwined and mutually supportive and should be implemented in parallel. Strategies to eradicate poverty and promote full and productive employment and decent work for all lie at the core of social integration.

67. Social integration is critical to combating poverty and unemployment, reducing inequality and vulnerability and to creating a society for all, which is an essential condition for sustainable economic growth and development.

68. Comprehensive efforts are needed to enable more integrated approaches to advance inclusive development. Policies to promote social integration should include measures aimed at a more equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth and better access to universal basic services. Social integration strategies need to embrace the human rights framework, with a particular focus on anti-discrimination policies and measures to promote the broad-based participation of all citizens.

69. The engagement of multiple stakeholders, especially of civil society, is crucial for fostering social integration, as it directly promotes the active participation of all members of society and enhances the transparency and accountability of the process.

70. In the light of the global financial and economic crisis, the social dimension of the development agenda has taken on a new urgency. The numbers of poor, working poor and unemployed have risen. As such, the crises highlighted in particular the need to develop or expand social protection systems which are key to reducing poverty and inequality, preventing unemployment, achieving social justice and protecting the most vulnerable people.

71. Based on the foregoing, the General Assembly may wish to consider the following key recommendations at the national level:

(a) Governments should renew their commitments to inclusive social development and to creating a society for all, and keep those commitments at the centre of policy decision-making by adopting socially inclusive policies;

(b) Governments should establish effective participatory mechanisms to increase the participation of citizens and communities, in particular the marginalized or excluded, in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of all national development strategies and policies;

(c) Governments should give highest priority to addressing the social impacts of the crises. Policy responses to the crises, including fiscal stimulus packages, need to maintain a focus on or shift emphasis to employment creation and ensure that the benefits reach the most affected groups, such as youth and the elderly. Policies should also continue to ensure the protection of core social spending on health and education as the fallout from the crisis lingers on;

(d) In particular, Governments which have not yet done so should carve out the fiscal space necessary to develop or extend systems of social protection and commit to establishing a social protection floor consisting of a set of core components, including education, health care, basic services and social transfers;

(e) Governments should develop national evaluation frameworks for social development, including possible benchmarks and indicators to measure social integration and the well-being of the population.

72. Socially inclusive strategies need to be supported at the international level; recommendations may include the following:

(a) Member States and the United Nations system should give priority to the establishment of a social protection floor as an effective tool for social integration;

(b) Member States, the United Nations system and other partners should exchange good policies and practices for mainstreaming social integration in social and economic policies at the national, regional and international levels;

(c) The United Nations system should provide support to national efforts to achieve inclusive social development, particularly by fostering social integration at the national, regional and international levels, in a coherent and coordinated manner;

(d) Donors and international financial institutions should provide debt relief, concessionary aid and grants to support national efforts to enhance fiscal space, in particular that of the poorer and the least developed countries;

(e) Donors and international financial institutions should not impose onerous conditionalities that restrict the policy space of national Governments, in particular in the area of social expenditure and programmes.
