



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
1 December 2016  
English  
Original: French

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### Commission for Social Development

#### Fifty-fifth session

1-10 February 2017

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and  
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:  
priority theme: strategies for the eradication of poverty to  
achieve sustainable development for all**

### **Statement submitted by Observatoire mauritanien des droits de l'homme et de la démocratie, 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

### **The fight against poverty, social exclusion and discrimination in Mauritania, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals**

#### Introduction:

The Observatoire mauritanien des droits de l'homme et de la démocratie (OMADHD) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) working in the field of surveillance and monitoring of human rights in Mauritania; this statement is made as part of our plea for the eradication of poverty so that the Sustainable Development Goals may be achieved.

Over the past few years, OMADHD has consistently submitted reports either to the Human Rights Council or to the various United Nations committees and treaty bodies, all in an attempt to promote and protect human rights in Mauritania.

The latest studies and alternative reports that we have prepared show that Mauritania has made significant progress in the fight against poverty, social exclusion and discrimination; however, inclusiveness and social cohesion still need to be strengthened, together with the consolidation of the rule of law, so that all Mauritians can enjoy equality of opportunity and equitable access to the available resources.

#### Legal basis:

The fight against poverty and social exclusion is one of the Mauritanian Government's specific objectives in the field of social policy. Pursuant to the conventions and international covenants ratified by Mauritania, its domestic legislation is underpinned by a real determination to fight poverty and exclusion; this translates into the enforcement of the national social cohesion strategy, even though that strategy has yet to be applied and implemented on the ground. It is supplemented by the national plan of action to fight discrimination in line with the provisions of the international convention on the elimination of discrimination. The said plan of action requires the State to take concrete measures to combat discrimination, both by providing legal protection to potential victims and by creating incentives. The draft plan of action has already been made available for consultation with the various stakeholders, but it must be recognized that its approval and implementation have suffered unconscionable delays. There are also holdups in the establishment of the national commission to combat mismanagement and the implementation of the national plan of action against trafficking in persons, which, once in force, will lead to the creation of a national centre to combat human trafficking and a mechanism to study, monitor and combat the phenomenon.

The 2015 act outlawing slavery makes slavery-like practices impossible and indeed unthinkable in Mauritania; it is a courageous measure against poverty, social exclusion and inequality.

The Press Freedom Act, which promotes freedom of expression and opinion, is an important asset in the endeavour to solidify the rule of law, but it is also important to support the process by implementing a code of ethics and professional conduct. A responsible, professional press will undoubtedly help educate the public

and disseminate civic culture widely, thus strengthening social cohesion. On the other hand, an opportunistic press whose sole focus is profit will only lead to mismanagement, clientelism, nepotism, tribalism and mediocrity.

#### Achievements:

Fight against poverty and social exclusion: Between 2010 and 2016 the Mauritanian Government undertook several projects and pilot programmes to combat poverty and exclusion. The Government's actions in that regard have, however, faced constant challenges due to a lack of institutional structure and the fact that its efforts have been poorly coordinated and unevenly distributed across the country. The flagship programme for this social policy (Emel), despite its success, is still just one isolated programme. This is not the case of the programme to eradicate slavery and combat poverty, which gave rise to the Tadamoune agency.

As regards public action, the agency has received strong encouragement but is still acting in the dark and in a less than ideal fashion, since it gives priority to certain areas, thus flagrantly discriminating against the inhabitants of the non-priority areas; the Emel programme, with the same procedures and same general line of action, has no plans to act horizontally, nor has it taken the time to map vulnerabilities with a view to making its efforts more efficacious.

#### Recommendations:

For the poverty eradication policy to succeed, eradication of social exclusion is a sine qua non; that in turn requires the establishment of a control and coordination mechanism whereby goals may be set and poverty measured using a set of indicators and reference values, guidance provided to the Government and all of its partner stakeholders, and national action plans drawn up to combat poverty.

One of the essential tools to be put in place for the purposes of that mechanism is a social indicators scorecard — an analytical tool to detect any changes in the population that need to be closely monitored. Among the key indicators it should track are: the unemployment rate; the youth unemployment rate and also the rate of young people not in employment, education or training; the long-term and early unemployment rates; real gross disposable household income; the risk-of-poverty rate; and income inequality.

The major objectives include social cohesion, gender equality, and equal opportunity for all thanks to effective social protection data sheet systems; effective measures to promote employment growth; together with good governance and stakeholder involvement.

As regards the active inclusion of persons excluded from the labour market, we recommend that States devise and implement “an integrated comprehensive strategy for the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market combining adequate income support, inclusive labour markets and access to quality services”.

Given the growing number of people at risk of dire poverty due to regional authorities' lack of perseverance, structural reforms should be considered that will enable investments to be made in the social field to achieve growth and social cohesion. Regional councils should be put in place whose membership is drawn

from the tribal groups of each individual region. Such broad representation is the only measure whereby recognition of tribal minorities' rights may be secured.

Tribal identity cannot be ignored in the Arab and African world, as it plays an important role in social cohesion, but the law of the majority very often shuts out tribal minorities, as they are overwhelmed by the majority.

Over the last few years the Mauritanian Government has enhanced the social dimension of governance and given priority to social investment of benefit to the citizenry, but it must always keep the tribal minorities in mind and, in particular, make greater investments for children, so as to break the vicious circle of inequality.

In addition, three indicators related to employment (the employment rate, long-term unemployment rate and youth unemployment rate) need to be monitored and the above-mentioned warning mechanism established to trigger corrective action.

A better means of achieving social justice and a fair distribution of revenue and national wealth is the implementation of a universal allowance programme. Why not? Its positive points outweigh the negative. Rather than supposing that it promotes laziness, one should take the view that it helps develop everyone's ability to act and innovate, and also that it allows job seekers to negotiate their employment contract with an employer without fear.

A universal allowance is the definitive solution to extreme poverty and lack of social cohesion; it strengthens an attachment and sense of pride in belonging to one's homeland.

Thank you.

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