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: “Fostering social development and social
justice through social policies to accelerate progress on the
implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable
Development and to achieve the overarching goal of
poverty eradication”

Statement submitted by Company of the Daughters of Charity of
St. Vincent de Paul, Congregation of the Mission, DePaul
University, International Association of Charities, International
Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and the Sisters
of Charity Federation, non-governmental organisations 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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.
Statement

The joint signers of this statement are faith-based organisations with special consultative ECOSOC accreditation belonging to the Vincentian Family. Together we count over two million members, working in 155 countries to restore dignity to people through eradication of poverty, hunger and homelessness. Through systemic change, we are enabling people living in poverty to identify the root causes of poverty, hunger, and lack of decent jobs, and create strategies to change structures that keep them in poverty.

The Priority theme is integral to us – faith-based organizations belonging to the Vincentian Family engaged in restoring dignity to people living in poverty. Through Systemic Change methodologies, we are enabling people living in poverty to identify the root causes of poverty, hunger, homelessness, and lack of decent jobs and to create strategies to change structures that condemn poverty. “Ending poverty is the challenge of our time”. Secretary-General October 17, 2023, day for the eradication of poverty, and it has been for the Vincentian Family for over 400 years.

Social justice for all is the basis for addressing inequalities and promoting a people centred approach; social justice intersects with various issues, including education, health, decent work, food, water, housing and digital technology. It is important to emphasize the potential for success through strong political will and the utilization of available technologies, resources, and knowledge. “We are entering into an era of information technology which brings with it unrecognized, and therefore even more insidious forms of poverty”.

If the poor people remain without access to information technology, they will be further marginalized and locked into a cycle of poverty. We are currently seeing a two-tier education becoming solidified with children who lack of access to computers or parents poorly prepared to guide them. Their parents will increasingly be locked into jobs that will perpetuate the cycle of poverty. In many countries including Congo, where the Daughters of Charity serve. The electricity is erratic and prevent youth to access technology. The Daughters of Charity have made generators available to certain schools and education centres.

According to new UNICEF-World Bank analysis, an estimated 333 million children globally – or 1 in 6 – live in extreme poverty, “Global Trends in Child Monetary Poverty According to International Poverty Lines” – which for the first time looks at trends in extreme child poverty – finds that, while the number of children living on less than US$2.15 a day decreased from 383 million to 333 million (or 13%) between 2013 and 2022, the economic impact of COVID-19 led to three lost years of progress, or 30 million fewer children than projected in the absence of COVID-19-related disruptions.

Poverty entails more than the lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods. Its manifestations include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination, and exclusion as well as the lack of participation in decision-making. Due to political violence in Burkina Faso, more and more children are being displaced and disabilities are on the rise due to malnutrition and lack of prenatal care the Daughters of Charity provide a safe environment for nearly 350 children. In the same way, the war in Ukraine has caused many to flee their homes and take refuge in neighbouring countries. Many have limited job and housing opportunities leaving many refugees in poor conditions.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul works to provide meals in collaboration with other agencies in the Vincentian Family such as DePaul International. In addition to providing basic necessities like food and clothing, the Daughters of Charity, the
Congregation of the Mission and the International Association of Charities are working together in various parts of Ukraine, Slovakia, and Poland to provide a safe space for families to come together and restore dignity and hope.

Many in Guatemala suffered the trauma of losing weakly structured homes and many loved ones in a devastating volcanic eruption several years ago and have yet to emerge from poverty since. This is a common dilemma in the wake of natural disasters. The Daughters of Charity and other members of the Vincentian Family have worked to build homes for some of the victims, but a tragic story of one of these victims made clear that even with a roof over her head, she was without a job and income, and lacked services such as childcare that would be needed to sustain her.

The Vincentian Family shares in the concerns expressed in the UN Women and UN DESA Gender Snapshot 2023 that highlights the trends and setbacks related to gender equality. We seek sustained investment in women and girls to accelerate progress in gender equality across the Sustainable Development Goals and urge a necessary focus on women living in extreme poverty.

Unfortunately, in Pope Francis words, “we must once more acknowledge new forms of poverty,” which we find “especially in children deprived of the serene present and a dignified future.” In all its manifestations, poverty is an affront to the God-given dignity of millions of people, preventing them from flourishing. Message of Pope Francis for the 2023 World Day of the Poor, 19 November 2023, No. 7.

Efforts to eradicate poverty should first recognize it as a complex reality, a combination of interconnected factors that manifests itself in all dimensions of human life. This calls for an integrated approach that combines monetary measures with comprehensive policies to address the non-monetary deprivations faced by millions of people at the educational, social, political, cultural, and spiritual levels.

In this regard, education is an effective antidote to poverty. Ensuring access to quality education is essential to provide girls and boys, not only with the skills that will enable them to contribute to society and access the labour market, but also with the spiritual goods that help them grow and flourish as persons. This, in turn, enables them to become “dignified agents of their own destiny who can develop their full potential”. Pope Francis, Address to the United Nations General Assembly, 25 September 2015.

Recommendations:

- Provide adequate, affordable housing, physical & mental medical support, education training opportunities, employment opportunities, access to support, and of course safety and security.
- Invest in economic well-being, social equity and justice, and environmental protection.
- Specify and manage both positive and negative impacts of systems, processes, organizations, and activities on people and social life.
- Emphasize the potential for success through strong political will and the utilization of available technologies, resources, and knowledge.
- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

In short, a new mindset is required. We need to design and implement policies that place the human person at the centre and ensure equitable access to the basic goods, resources and opportunities that are essential to sustain life and promote the integral development and well-being of every person.
Inclusion focuses on the need to “put people first” in development processes. It promotes social inclusion of the poor and vulnerable by empowering people, building cohesive and resilient societies, and making institutions accessible and accountable to citizens.

The SDGs were aimed at eradicating extreme hunger and poverty, ensuring a clean global environment, providing quality education and eliminating gender inequalities, among others. The targeted date for achieving these goals is 2030. Let us accelerate progress to reach these goals. St. Vincent de Paul, a 17th century saint, provides a concrete example for today, that vision and action can change the world!