Commission for Social Development
Sixty-first session
5–14 February 2024
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 Congregation of the Mission, 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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.
Statement

With this year’s theme in mind, the Congregation of the Mission would like to call attention to the importance of considering homelessness in multilateral efforts aimed at poverty reduction and reduced inequalities. Homelessness is often the end result of large-scale societal inequalities such as a lack of access to decent work, forced migration, and unreasonable costs of living. Once someone finds themselves or their families living in poverty and without adequate housing, access to basic needs and services such as healthcare, education, and a healthy environment becomes much more challenging.

In the same way there is no one cause of homelessness and poverty; there is no one solution either. We must form multisectoral partnerships and work both up and downstream to address the causes and inequalities that can lead to homelessness and their subsequent impacts. For upstream determinants of homelessness, there is an opportunity to prevent the cycle of homelessness and poverty from ever starting through efforts such as bolstering education and increasing access to adequate wages. Working downstream, we can address poverty and homelessness that are already present through means such as increasing access to affordable housing and designing job training programs for impoverished communities.

For all of these efforts, it is essential to keep in mind the most marginalized and vulnerable communities that often face increased inequalities, such as persons with disabilities, refugees, Indigenous peoples, women, and children. Too frequently, these communities are left behind in interventions and programs, and we must not ignore the additional discrimination and adversities these groups face in breaking the cycle of poverty and homelessness. In many instances, programs designed specifically for these groups would be appropriate.

We must also remember there is no one-size-fits-all solution to eradicating poverty. What works in one community or geographic region may not work in another. It is not appropriate to try and force a solution to function within a community. Instead, we must commit to developing culturally and geographically appropriate solutions to homelessness, poverty, and inequality, in partnership with the communities themselves.

As the number of people experiencing homelessness and poverty continues to grow globally, it is more essential than ever that we dedicate resources to alleviating and preventing homelessness and realize that no single organization or program can end this cycle on its own. It will take innovative partnerships and collaborations to end poverty and the social inequalities that lead to and feed into it. It is also vital that people who have or currently are experiencing poverty and homelessness are included in these partnerships and collaborations as equal stakeholders and subject matter experts on what causes poverty and homelessness and possible solutions. They offer invaluable lived experience and perspectives that cannot be drawn upon otherwise.

All of this said, the Congregation of the Mission calls upon the United Nations and its Member States to commit to the following:

1. Support for global programs and initiatives aimed at reducing current homelessness and addressing the potential causes of homelessness.

2. Dedication to encouraging, developing, and supporting multisectoral partnerships working towards innovative and ethical poverty and homelessness reduction strategies.
3. The involvement of people with lived experiences surrounding homelessness and poverty in planning and implementing programs related to poverty and homelessness reduction and prevention.

4. The explicit inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable communities in programs aimed at reducing poverty and global inequality.