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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 Fondazione Proclade Internazionale-onlus, 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

Fondazione Proclade Internazionale-onlus is a global family comprising Sisters, Priests, Brothers, and Partners who are active in seventy-two countries. Through our grassroots programs, we promote social development and social justice, with the aim of eradicating poverty and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This statement is presented by Fondazione Proclade Internazionale-onlus, representing the collective voices of our partners from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Cameroon, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region – China), India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Timor Leste, Uganda, the United States, and Uruguay.

Fondazione Proclade Internazionale-onlus wholeheartedly embraces the 62nd Commission for Social Development’s priority theme: ‘Promoting social development and social justice through social policies to accelerate progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to achieve the overarching goals of poverty eradication.’

We find ourselves at a critical juncture in human history. On one hand, we are grappling with a deep-rooted social and economic crisis, conspicuously exacerbated by the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in worsening structural inequalities. On the other hand, there is a unique opportunity to enact the 2030 Development Agenda, holding great potential to address these crises.

Armed violence, extreme poverty, hunger, racial and ethnic discrimination, gender-based violence, economic instability, the climate crisis, the digital divide, humanitarian crises resulting from conflicts and migration, forced displacement, and the proliferation of arms and nuclear weapons all reflect the systemic violence experienced by millions of people across different regions of the world.

The escalation of armed conflicts and violence poses a significant threat to social development and the establishment of a new social contract that champions socio-environmental justice.

Governments have enacted laws and public policies aimed at combating poverty and hunger, including social assistance, gender equity programs, subsidies, and food vouchers for low-income families. While these initiatives represent substantial progress, many remain confined to legal frameworks, with limited real-world transformation.

We observe a good number of states are diligently working to enhance the quality of education systems. Nevertheless, girls, adolescents, and women, particularly those in rural areas, continue to be marginalized.

It is evident that some policies designed to bolster economic processes through subsidy programs do not always achieve genuine financial independence; in some cases, they inadvertently foster dependency.

The lack of political and financial commitment, combined with pervasive corruption at all levels of government, hinders the realization of the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), leaving these goals mostly on paper.

These realities of social injustice and systemic imbalances mean that efforts to establish resilient, inclusive societies fall short of the goal to leave no one behind and achieve sustainable development for all.
To attain resilient societies with sustainable development and social justice as guiding principles, we must consider the following:

1. **Pursuit of peace and respect for human rights.** Armed conflicts and violence exacerbate poverty and hunger, and the globalized world has transformed regional conflicts into global issues. As such, the pursuit of peace, based on the principle of self-determination for all peoples and respect for human rights, must be a top priority to achieve sustainable social development.

2. **Decent employment.** Generating employment and ensuring decent working conditions are fundamental to social development and the creation of resilient societies. However, policies that guarantee these conditions continue to be a challenge. Post-pandemic unemployment rates and informal labor have increased, leading to heightened poverty levels in many countries.

3. **Subsidies for the small businesses.** Various states have actively endorsed policies aimed at bolstering small local businesses, resulting in notable enhancements to both their overall quality of life and the revitalization of their enterprises. Certain indicators have revealed the necessity for subsidies to facilitate the upgrade of machinery and technology, enabling the establishment and consolidation of employment sources. These initiatives empower small businesses to compete effectively with larger, modern establishments, fostering economic growth and aiding in the alleviation of poverty.

4. **Gender equality.** Promoting mechanisms to enhance the quality of life for girls, adolescents, and women, especially in rural areas and marginalized urban neighbourhoods, is imperative. While there has been increased female participation in electoral and political spheres, as well as leadership positions, this progress remains insufficient, and a gender pay gap persists.

5. **Anti-corruption efforts.** Corruption is a pervasive issue that affects government systems and state institutions, eroding the credibility of public policies designed to promote comprehensive social development. Urgent measures are needed to establish and reinforce mechanisms for countering corruption, fostering transparent and trustworthy processes, and ensuring that resources allocated for poverty eradication achieve their intended objectives.

**Call for Action:**

To expedite the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to attain the overarching objective of eradicating poverty, we urge Member States and all entities associated with the United Nations, both within and beyond, to undertake the following actions:

- Implement effective international mechanisms to combat corruption, fostering greater transparency and efficiency in governance.
- Prioritize the allocation of a greater portion of national development plans and budgets towards social policies and public welfare, concurrently reducing military expenditures. This will enable the redirection of resources towards poverty eradication and developmental endeavours.
- Ensure the right to access information and participate in the evaluation of the SDGs, making the SDG process, targets, and National Voluntary SDG reports publicly accessible to facilitate accountability.
• Maintain and expand laws and public policies that ensure the comprehensive social development of girls, adolescents, young women, and women, with a particular focus on healthcare, education, and labor, as well as political participation.

• Facilitate economic aid for young people to engage in development activities, reduce school dropouts, and deter involvement in armed groups, particularly for young entrepreneurs seeking to create employment opportunities and foster development.

• Enact laws that promote labor market integration for migrants.

• Foster the decentralization of industrial sectors, relocating them to rural areas to mitigate urban migration and concurrently reduce poverty in both urban and rural areas.

• Promote the agricultural sector through appropriate policies, subsidies, and welfare measures for impoverished farmers.

• Invest in infrastructure enhancements, promote sustainable agricultural practices, and support local markets.

• Establish policies for environmental protection and rural development to halt the exodus of indigenous and rural populations to urban centers.

• Expand social policies by revising tax policies to better serve vulnerable populations.

• Increase public investment in education and healthcare to ensure universal access, particularly in underserved, marginalized, and rural regions.

• Promote sustainable job creation and skills development.

• Address regional disparities and inequalities within each country through equitable resource allocation.

• Encourage community participation in project design and implementation, while establishing transparent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

• Implement policies and subsidies that facilitate the establishment and consolidations of small and local businesses.

• Develop policies that distribute social benefits, such as universal basic income, especially to female heads of households.

• Implement measures to protect against land exploitation by large transnational corporations and promote environmentally friendly policies, as outlined in agreements like the Escazú Agreement.