Commission for Social Development  
Sixty-first session  
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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 Sikh Human Rights Group, 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

The recent report A/78/175 offers a comprehensive and sobering analysis of current global economic challenges, shedding light on several critical trends and indicators:

1. Poverty levels have either escalated or plateaued in various countries, underscoring a troubling global trend.
2. A growing proportion of individuals in stable employment find themselves earning wages that fall below the poverty threshold, particularly in the face of rising living costs.
3. The gig economy now represents a significant segment of the labour market.
4. A substantial majority of those working within the gig economy receive incomes that place them beneath the poverty line.
5. Institutional frameworks historically designed to ensure a living wage are increasingly undermined, failing to secure a reasonable standard of living for workers.
6. Women and children are disproportionately affected by the current economic paradigms prevalent across the globe.
7. Households reliant on a single income earner are frequently among the most financially vulnerable.

The propositions put forth by the Special Rapporteur, Oliver De Schutter, are both critical and urgent to counteract these growing poverty levels and enhance living standards universally. The dominance of Transnational Corporations (TNCs) in the world economy, with their emphasis on profit maximization, often leads to cost-cutting measures at the expense of worker welfare. These corporations are compelled by market pressures to maximize investor returns, leading to outsourcing and offshoring practices that exploit countries with weaker labour laws and lower wages.

Moreover, employees of small, family-owned businesses are not exempt from economic hardship, with many receiving wages that do not meet the minimum threshold. The challenges faced by platform workers mirror those in the gig economy, where a race to the bottom in terms of cost and investment leads to deteriorating conditions for the ‘contracting workers.’

To address these multifaceted issues, a fundamental re-evaluation of current strategies is required. This re-evaluation must cut through the aggressive media narratives against unions, fair wages, and legislation designed to elevate living standards for all workers. One potential solution is a Universal Basic Income, funded by increased taxation, to supplement the earnings of those in poverty, which may be more palatable than directly confronting TNCs over wage disparities.

For TNCs, we propose an enhancement of the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) role, including rigorous monitoring of subcontractors. We recommend that TNCs report their subcontracting activities to national or international bodies like the ILO to ensure compliance with minimum standards. This would empower the ILO to inspect, when necessary, and address grievances from workers where standards are compromised.

While we support the fortification of existing labour laws, we contend that innovative, forward-thinking solutions are essential to effectively combat poverty in this evolving global landscape. Legislation from a bygone era may not suffice for the
challenges of today. We advocate for adaptive and imaginative strategies that stay ahead of the curve, ensuring that our approaches to social development and poverty eradication are as dynamic and resilient as the populations they aim to support.