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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 Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum, 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

In adherence to ECOSOC resolution 1996/31, the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF) upholds its steadfast commitment to nurturing and empowering youth across the OIC Member States. This written statement outlines our strategic priorities for the 62nd session of the Social Development Forum in 2024.

The session’s 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,” harmonizes with the mission and vision of ICYF. This detailed statement elaborates on our key priorities, shedding light on key youth perspectives within the OIC region.

Foremost among the concerns of 63 member organizations of the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum are the prevalent acts of violence against women, girls, and the elderly, which have escalated to epidemic levels. Our primary focus remains on addressing the urgent humanitarian crisis resulting from the assaults on Palestinian children, women, the elderly, and unarmed civilians, creating a long-term human crisis and a social and economic pandemic that worsens global suffering. These egregious violations of United Nations (UN) resolutions and international law have left our youth in a state of fear and confusion. Urgent assistance is imperative for those affected by this distressing situation, providing relief to the injured, displaced women and girls, and the deeply traumatized civilians.

The traditional concept of a social contract, rooted in Enlightenment philosophy, necessitates a contemporary reinterpretation. Given the complexities posed by globalization, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, rapid technological advancements, environmental challenges, and shifting demographic landscapes, we advocate for a complete rethinking of social justice. At the forefront of this reformation is the pivotal role of youth, empowering them and enabling their active participation in shaping their destinies. To attain social justice and development, addressing the underlying barriers to progress and sustainability is imperative. From the viewpoint of youth in the OIC region, these barriers include economic disparities, unequal access to quality education, gender disparities, environmental degradation, displacement, conflicts, and the pressing need for comprehensive social protection systems.

Our secondary priority revolves around implementing youth-centric approaches to confront these challenges, ensuring that the concerns and aspirations of young people inform policymaking and implementation. Empowering youth as dynamic agents of transformative change remains central to our objectives. ICYF acknowledges the enormous potential of youth in advancing progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

Our third priority is dedicated to facilitating and advocating for youth-led initiatives focused on sustainable development. This necessitates providing opportunities for young individuals to systematically engage in innovative projects, actively participate in decision-making processes, and contribute their unique perspectives to the global development discourse.

In our unwavering pursuit of social development and justice, inclusivity and objectivity hold utmost significance.

Our fourth priority centers on advocating for policies and programs that ensure equitable access to opportunities and resources for all youth, irrespective of their background, geography, or circumstances. The contemporary digital revolution has significantly reshaped the global landscape, with youth often at the helm of this transformation.
Our fifth priority revolves around leveraging the potential of digital technologies to empower youth. This encompasses initiatives aimed at enhancing digital literacy, fostering digital entrepreneurship, and utilizing technology for education and skills development. Digital transformation is seen as a powerful catalyst for youth empowerment and societal advancement, especially in less developed member states where access to technology should be regarded as a human right. Enabling meaningful youth participation in decision-making processes is not only a fundamental right but also the cornerstone of achieving social development and justice.

Our sixth priority revolves around advocating for the active engagement of youth in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. We strongly advocate for the establishment of youth advisory councils and a variety of formal and non-formal platforms that amplify the voices of young individuals, ensuring their significant role in shaping policies that directly affect their lives. ICYF tirelessly endeavors to provide platforms and opportunities for less fortunate youth in the OIC region and beyond, emphasizing that international cooperation is essential to attain the 2030 agenda. Collaboration and partnerships play a pivotal role in our pursuit of progress and achieving our goals.

Our seventh priority is centered on strengthening youth local and international networks and fostering partnerships at local, regional, and international levels. Our aim is to create a supportive ecosystem that encourages knowledge exchange, capacity-building, and the dissemination of best practices among youth-led organizations and initiatives.

Finally, ICYF remains devoted to advancing the welfare and prospects of youth worldwide, dedicated to championing the priorities outlined in this statement. Acknowledging the diverse conditions and circumstances of youth across regions and member states, we emphasize that disregarding the distinct situations of any segment of youth worldwide, especially those under conflict or severe economic crisis will hinder the achievement of the SDGs. By reviewing, rethinking innovatively, and reimagining the social contract, confronting root obstacles, nurturing youth-led initiatives, promoting inclusivity and equality, embracing digital transformation, facilitating and encouraging youth engagement in decision-making, and fostering strategic partnerships, our goal is to expedite progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We eagerly anticipate engaging with our esteemed counterparts at the 62nd session of the Social Development Forum to collectively advance the root causes of social development and social justice for all.