



## Economic and Social Council

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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 The Blue Tree Foundation, 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

### **Addressing the Fundamental Solution to Poverty through Expansion of Online Education on ‘Social Digital Entrepreneurship’**

The Blue Tree Foundation proposes the expansion of online education on ‘Social Digital Entrepreneurship’ to children and youth worldwide as a fundamental solution to the issue of poverty.

Global poverty is not decreasing easily. The amount of aid to developing countries continues to increase, but the effectiveness is lacking. Economic growth and poverty reduction in these countries do not necessarily follow. Instead, conflicts between humans, such as cyber violence, hatred, and war, are on the rise. These conflicts threaten the lives of the impoverished and make them even poorer.

While educational inequality is often cited as the cause of poverty, the reality is that many children in developing countries lack even the basic infrastructure to focus on proper academics. They often find themselves engaged in livelihoods, with insufficient physical time, a lack of dedicated study spaces, and a shortage of quality education and caring instructors. In essence, what these children need first is the resolution of the educational infrastructure issue that allows them to receive a complete education, rather than just educational content and devices.

The solution is online education utilizing digital technology. It allows for a much greater degree of freedom from temporal and spatial constraints, making it easier to connect with outstanding instructors. The costs of promoting and implementing online education are significantly lower compared to offline education. On the other hand, the added value is substantial. Global wealth is converging towards the digital-based big tech markets, encompassing AI, big data, autonomous driving, Chat GPT, and more, dominating nearly every sector, including the economy, society, culture, and the arts. Digital authority has become the new power. In the midst of this paradigm shift, ‘digital thinking’ is the essential skill currently needed to survive. During the COVID-19 period, the number of internet users increased significantly, from 4.1 billion in 2019 (54% of the world’s population) to 4.9 billion in 2021 (63% of the world’s population). However, only a fraction of the global population possesses this ability to actively utilize digital thinking.

Therefore, it is now necessary to provide online education on ‘Social Digital Entrepreneurship’ to children worldwide. While traditional ‘digital literacy’ education only teaches digital proficiency, ‘Social Digital Entrepreneurship’ teaches managing with utilizing digital while cultivating pioneering spirit and civic consciousness. It is now crucial to provide practical assistance to break the cycle of poverty by ensuring that children do not get left behind, but rather take the lead in the global digital technology market that generates profit.

A ‘social digital entrepreneur’ refers to an individual who possesses both moral character and capability. Moral character denotes the ability to live and cooperate with others, while capability refer to the knowledge and skill required to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Those who possess both moral character and capability can generate both economic and social value. Pursuing economic development alone can perpetuate poverty for the disadvantaged and exacerbate social issues. Likewise, focusing solely on social development can make it challenging to obtain the resources and momentum necessary to ultimately address poverty issues. However, if the number of individuals with social digital entrepreneurial spirit continues to grow, it will enable a sustainable society, creating a virtuous cycle structure.

The Blue Tree Foundation has been consistently engaging in activities that bridge economic value of businesses and social values of civil society for global sustainability. Projects such as the youth cyber violence prevention education ‘Cyber Jungle Guardian Blue Elephant(PUCO)’ with Samsung since 2020 and the youth digital citizenship education ‘Harmonious Digital World’ with IT company Kakao since 2016, not only ensures the rights of youth across the nations to safely navigate the digital world, but also creates social impact by carrying out corporate social responsibility initiatives that support individuals in enhancing their own well-being by helping others. Rather than having children passively influenced by digital technology and the environment, the goal is to educate them in how to use it to protect and advance themselves, their local communities, and the world, and foster their moral character and capabilities. Particularly, these projects hold significance as social issue-solving models distributed for free through collaboration between global corporations and NGOs. In fact, ‘Cyber Jungle Guardian Blue Elephant (PUCO)’ and ‘Harmonious Digital World’ have been evaluated to generate a total of 56.3 million US dollars in social value for the past three years.

Therefore, in order to further expand support for children to become social digital entrepreneurs and break free from the cycle of poverty on their own, international cooperation from organizations like the United Nations is essential. With this in mind, three initiatives are proposed to the United Nations.

1. Declaration of the importance of social digital entrepreneurship. The social digital entrepreneurship can effectively prevent victimization in the rapidly changing digital age. This will lead to ‘social development,’ enhancement in well-being of each individual member of the society, and ‘social justice,’ where rights and responsibilities are fairly distributed. Consequently, poverty will ultimately decrease. In addition, if these educational programs are recommended or made mandatory as part of the system, it can also create job opportunities for professional instructors and organizations involved in the operation, ensuring sustainable education.
2. Establishment of a platform for organizations interested in jointly promoting social digital entrepreneurship education to collaborate. A dedicated global body and international summit are necessary to address common global issues.
3. Activation of a sponsorship platform in order for the social digital entrepreneurship education content produced in each country to be widely distributed, and for global corporations to participate to achieve their ESG initiatives. Cooperation between NGOs and businesses is crucial to enable people worldwide to lead independent lives in the digital age and actively participate in economic activities.

The Blue Tree Foundation aims to foster social digital entrepreneurial spirit in children worldwide, ensuring that no one is left behind, impoverished, or harmed in the new era. We urge international organizations to pay greater attention in providing equal opportunities for everyone to develop the moral character and capabilities demanded by the new age.