



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
24 November 2014

Original: English

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### Commission for Social Development

#### Fifty-third session

4-13 February 2015

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the  
twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority  
theme: rethinking and strengthening social development in the  
contemporary world**

### **Statement submitted by International Committee for Peace and Reconciliation, 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.



## Statement

Society is a collection of individuals united by a common goal that can be compared to a linked chain. Like a chain, a society is only as strong as its weakest link. The strength or weakness, productivity or unproductivity and peacefulness or hostility of a society mostly depend on its individual members.

A family is a building block of society. An individual is born in a family and then moves into society. Therefore, an individual is a connecting link between the family and society. Because of certain common beliefs or interests, families form groups within society. If these groups of people do not communicate or interact with one another, each will remain isolated and, over time, walls of fear and suspicion will emerge and surround each isolated group, paving the way for the domination of one group over the other. This will generate a hierarchy of domination. In the course of human history, such domination has been observed. Therefore, to ensure social development and integration, certain dominant parameters, such as poverty eradication, education, health care, justice and the protection of human rights, must be considered.

Poverty is a very dominant obstacle to social integration. By defining poverty as a lack of basic material needs, nearly one in seven people today do not get enough food to be healthy and lead a meaningful life. To a person in extreme poverty, physical survival becomes the only goal. It is often accompanied by degradation to a state of powerlessness. Poverty is multidimensional and has many attributes. It is generally agreed upon that one of the main causes of poverty in society is the disproportional access to available resources by just a few. If we measure poverty as a length of economic distance between two individuals or communities, social integration becomes possible only by minimizing this distance. Closing the gap of access to health care will also contribute to social integration.

Education is the means of learning new things and is a vehicle through which an individual travels along different stages of life. Early education must be designed in such a way that it does not support the status quo, reinforce prejudices and stereotypes or ignore the real lives of children. As society is constantly evolving and new techniques are developed to meet human needs, education must be in harmony with changing situations. Therefore, education based on needs and the environment must be available to all members of society and be modified as often as necessary. This will enable children, when they grow up, to escape narrow domestic walls.

Hunger is another dominant factor that obstructs social integration. To a hungry person, food is the immediate goal that keeps aside all other attributes of a social life. Even though great efforts have been made to eliminate hunger and the target of halving the proportion of people who suffer from hunger has been included in the Millennium Development Goals, the problem remains persistent, pervasive and complex.

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