



# Economic and Social Council

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## Commission for Social Development

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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: rethinking and strengthening social  
development in the contemporary world**

### **Statement submitted by Center for Africa Development and Progress, 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

In the quest to understand how societies function, and in order to improve them, many researchers have propounded ideas about how societies should be organized and resources allocated and used.

As we rethink and seek to strengthen social development in the present and for the future, one important problem should not escape our attention, and that is how to put societies and, for that matter, human beings at the centre of policies.

The world is gradually moving away from the practice in which policies are designed by people who, most of the time, do not understand the organization or functioning of the targeted beneficiaries or societies. They ignorantly try to implement their ideas, and the outcomes have been disastrous.

How do we empower the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalized in order to maximize the benefits of our intervention? Does empowerment mean that development partners must continue throwing money at people, as has been the case in most instances? Or should development partners show targeted beneficiaries how to find resources through their own efforts?

In our candid view, social empowerment policies work better when the so-called beneficiaries are involved at every stage of planning and implementation. Listening to people living in poverty is key in the attempt to promote their voices. By listening to people, we can better understand and address their needs, and they will feel ownership of the initiative and be willing to ensure its success. A programme that is forced upon people is bound to end in failure.

We would also like to see changes in knowledge acquisition and technology transfer. It is best to transform education to make it more responsive to the needs and aspirations of a people. The comparative advantage that the developed countries have over developing countries is mostly in the areas of expertise and technology. We have seen how technology has brought about change in many countries and how it continues to affect developments around the world. The rapid transfer of technology could help bridge the technology divide.

Strengthening and enhancing education is crucial. The educational systems in most countries of Africa have not changed since the post-independence era, when they were designed to limit people to acquiring only certain skill sets. Over half a century after independence, these archaic educational systems are still being used. These systems do not teach people how to add value to raw materials or how to invent or manufacture. Rather, they teach them how to become employees. We strongly believe that a paradigm shift in social development needs to include a fundamental change in the existing educational systems.

In conclusion, we believe that the aim of projects for social change should be to improve human life, with the full participation of people. The practice of giving handouts should end and policies should instead aim to empower people to be self-sustaining. The issues of qualitative education and the transfer of knowledge and technology cannot be ignored.