



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
1 December 2015

Original: English

Commission for Social Development

Fifty-fourth session

3-12 February 2016

**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 Jesus Weeps Over Africa, 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

How can we represent and strengthen social development in the world?

The case of the province of Kongo Central (Democratic Republic of the Congo) as presented by the non-governmental organization Jesus Weeps Over Africa.

Genuine development is a process that encourages individuals to flourish, improves awareness, involves the majority of people in decision-making and goes hand in hand with economic progress. And in our opinion, that is the best way to view underdevelopment — a way that avoids focusing primarily on some countries lagging economically behind others; instead, it can be viewed as a consideration of the specific problems, difficulties and solutions that a developing country must face in order to develop. That definition puts humans as social beings at the centre of the concerns of development activities.

In a world that is more civilized, economic development focuses on infrastructure and large-scale equipment. That is accompanied by a social development that puts people at the centre of everything, without forgetting technological and economic innovation, as everything must go hand in hand.

In the 1980s and 1990s, development had reached a decisive moment of change as donors became closer to grass-roots communities.

Up until the end of the 1970s, bilateral aid was channelled from financial institutions and the governments of rich countries to the governments of poor countries. That type of aid saw a decline in the 1980s and 1990s when, due to mismanagement, the Zaire Government entirely lost the confidence of its donors. Non-governmental organizations from the north had channelled the aid they received primarily through local non-governmental development organizations (NGDOs). That led to the establishment and increase in the number of NGDOs. And indeed, at the same time as large amounts of money were being mobilized by NGDOs, those development organizations were doing highly valuable work on the ground.

The idea of an alternative approach to development was already gaining traction in the 1980s. Many NGDOs were founded on the endogenous nature of development: they emphasized the fact that development work should be based on real needs as identified by grass-roots communities and that the sole aim of NGDOs should be to help those communities to realize and achieve their objectives.

Other non-governmental organizations were founded on the participatory and comprehensive nature of development; that is, they highlighted the fact that development is not limited to a single part of people's lives in society, but deals with all social, spiritual and material aspects of the life of a community; the solidarity and complementarity of a joint response are key principles for achieving success. When a project is underway to develop a water source or construct a road that the community can use, everyone joins in and each person seeks to contribute to the best of their abilities.

At the beginning of the 2000s, many non-governmental organizations from the north wanted to move closer to communities in the south by founding or setting up local field offices in the southern regions. For example, one organization which set

up in Matadi was SNV, a development organization from the Netherlands whose flagship issue is institutional capacity-building for grass-roots organizations.

What is the position of our NGDO regarding the title of the priority theme: “rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world”?

Jesus weeps over Africa is a non-profit-making association established under ordinary Congolese law. Its goals include:

1. Encouraging our contemporaries to overcome their sense of resignation, starting to work in light of the new situation that has been established in the country and warning the Congolese to avoid any way of thinking that confuses the law with an abdication of the responsibilities that God entrusts to the Congolese people in everyday life.
2. Giving people the opportunity to take action themselves and exercising their rights concerning the freedom of individuals.

That is why Jesus weeps over Africa believes that the development of the peoples of the world today is founded on an imbalance of power. The richest dominate the less well-off and there are no true friendships among the nations: every friendship is tied to mutual interests. A country that does not have anything to give others is left forsaken because others cannot profit from that. This is a paradox or ambiguity that should be clarified. Social development should not have conditions attached if we are to see ourselves as citizens of the same great country or of a global village.

How your statement relates to the priority theme of the fifty-fourth session of the United Nations Commission for Social Development (CSocD54)

Our Declaration highlights the changing nature of development as a concept; from the time it began, it was only defined in terms of national income per capita, which meant significant capital to build large-scale amenities and infrastructure, which unfortunately did not benefit local populations. In the 1970s, people began to speak out and criticize this form of development assistance; and in the definition that we offer, we suggest that genuine development is a process that encourages individuals to flourish, improves awareness, involves the majority of people in decision-making, and goes hand in hand with economic progress. And in our opinion, that is the best way to view underdevelopment — a way which avoids focusing primarily on some countries lagging economically behind others; instead, it can be viewed as a consideration of the specific problems, difficulties and solutions that a developing country must face in order to develop.

In the 1980s and 1990s, donors from the north changed their attitude towards governments from the south; that was particularly the case with us in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire) where attention had been turned to non-governmental development organizations: they mobilized significant funds while at the same time, taking on a large part of the State’s work.

At the beginning of the 2000s there was a change of regime and the Government regained the confidence of donors. Since then, bilateral and multilateral cooperation has resumed, while conversely, donors have reduced their levels of support in favour of local NGDOs. As already noted, many NGDOs from the north have established local offices in the country’s main cities and have started

to do the work of local NGDOs — in other words, this tendency has begun to stifle their work.

Questions that should be asked concern how to redirect development assistance at the grass-roots level so that it is dealt with both by the public institutions of the State and by the NDGOs, the latter of which proved their worth for almost two decades when the State had no presence on the ground. There are NGDOs from the north such as the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) based in Matadi, which has a slick programme to strengthen grass-roots development bodies, the sort of programme that should be encouraged and followed up by other development agencies.

The subject of our presentation is: “What kind of development should there be in the contemporary world?”

The subject is one for debate since, as we can see from our statement, development is a concept that has evolved since it was introduced into the economy in 1946 during the establishment of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, an agency of the World Bank, whose objective was to assist countries that had been most affected by the post-war crisis.

Initially, the World Bank criterion for identifying a developed country was based on per capita national income. It turned out that that concept was not suited to our African societies or to the third world as, even national income is significant in a country such as ours, since the bulk of foreign capital has been invested in sectors that do not benefit local populations but instead benefit those in power and especially benefit foreigners.

And we have described how this concept developed during the 1980s and 1990s, when significant funds had been channelled to the grass-roots level by local NGDOs before the resumption of cooperation with the Government, whose terms of office started in 2003 and 2006. At that time, a large number of NGDOs from the north were operating here; they now have local offices in the country as well as in towns in the interior of the country. Emphasis is now placed on institutional capacity-building, in order to achieve a certain kind of development — all a development which requires humans as social beings to be put at the centre of the concerns of all development activities.
