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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 Partnership for Global Justice, 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

Rethinking and Strengthening Social Development in the Contemporary World: Highlighting Access to Justice, Social Protection, and Reducing Military Spending

Partnership for Global Justice, an NGO in Special Consultative status with ECOSOC at the United Nations, stands in solidarity with those who are poor and oppressed, seeking with them access to justice and a Social Protection Floor by reallocating the 1.75 trillion in military spending to investment in access to justice and social security.

The members of Partnership for Global Justice are committed to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people, particularly women, who are denied access to justice and, consequently, are unable to challenge discrimination and to exercise their rights. As the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights points out, “Equal access to justice can serve to protect and improve the income and livelihoods of people living in poverty.” Access to justice can promote the capabilities, choices, security and power of the disadvantaged. Access to justice must not be the privilege of a few, but a crucial element in social development, if we are to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality. Access to justice enables people to exercise their fundamental human rights, build stable and peaceful societies, and achieve other objectives and targets of the post-2015 program.

As Lawyers Without Borders emphasizes, “States should recognize that investing in access to justice for all is not only an obligation but also an opportunity to reinforce human rights and fight poverty.” The 2011 report of the Development Bank supports providing access to justice, noting that justice is an essential public good that benefits development and poverty reduction.

In addition to access to justice, the poor and those on the margins of society need social policies that protect them against certain contingencies of life. According to the UN System Task Team on the post-2015 UN development agenda, “nearly 80 per cent of the global population presently has no access to comprehensive social protection that enables people to cope with life risks.” In 2014 the Secretariat issued a statement praising strategies that move beyond a narrow focus on safety nets toward social policies concerned with universal social protection and redistribution.

Partnership for Global Justice supports the growing international consensus in favour of universal social protection, particularly by means of the Social Protection Floor. Social policies structured around empowerment of people and communities play an important role in breaking the vicious cycles of poverty and exclusion and become the driver of sustainable development and thereby support the post-2015 development agenda.

At its 100th session, the International Labour Organization (ILO) passed a resolution on social security emphasizing that 1) social security is a human right; 2) social security is a social necessity and 3) social security is an economic necessity. Additionally, reworking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world means focusing on what many studies have called an economy based on social considerations and solidarity. In this regard, open and fair

non-military trade must receive more support and consideration from all stakeholders, since it promotes the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

The 1995 Copenhagen Declaration in stated that governments were committed to looking into “the negative impact on development of excessive military expenditures, the arms trade, and investment for arms production and acquisition.” In 2013, global military expenditures amounted to US\$ 1.75 trillion; this is more than a dozen times what the world spent on official development assistance. Recognizing that people are at the heart of development and that economies must meet their needs, we support the Copenhagen Declaration’s stress on the commitment to free up financial resources by reducing military spending, thus allowing allocation of additional funds for social and economic development.

We regret that there is still a long way to go to reduce military spending and reallocate these funds for the benefit of people, especially the most vulnerable. We are in agreement with the appeal made by the 2012 Civil Society Forum to reduce military spending in favour of development. Reducing military expenditures by even 2% and allocating that money to provide social protection or social security would greatly advance peace and development, the real foundation of the security and stability of a nation.

Standing in solidarity with the poor and oppressed means improving the economic condition of individuals at each stage of their lives, particularly children from age 0-5, jobless youth, women and the elderly. This requires access to justice and protection against contingencies such as sickness, disability, old age and unemployment.

Partnership for Global Justice has two recommendations:

- Use existing tools to make military expenditures public and adopt an economic policy that uses part, at least 2%, of these expenditures to support access to justice and social protection programs for the 20% who are poor and the most marginalized.
- Combine efforts to implement the ILO’s Recommendation Concerning National Floors of Social Protection, No. 202. Our organization, Partnership for Global Justice, is confident that this 54th session of the Commission for Social Development will strengthen the social pillar of the post-2015 development agenda and bring hope to the poorest and most marginalized peoples of the world.