



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
1 December 2015

Original: English

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### 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 Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo and Global Foundation for Democracy and Development, Inc., non-governmental organizations 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

Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo (Funglode) and Global Foundation for Democracy and Development (GFDD) are not-for-profit institutions, created by His Excellency Dr. Leonel Fernández, former President of the Dominican Republic. Both organizations are dedicated to formulating innovative and strategic proposals on global issues of national and international interest to contribute to the creation of effective public policies related to the governance and social and economic development of the Dominican Republic, Latin America and the world.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in its 2012 paper entitled *Social inclusion, social transformations, social innovation — What role for UNESCO in 2014-2021?* defines an inclusive society “as a society for everyone, in whom every individual has an active role to play. That society is built on values of fairness, equality, social justice, human rights and freedoms, as well as on the principles of tolerance and recognition of the diversity.” Such principles of social inclusion are highly relevant for the purposes of achieving the recently adopted 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, as progress simply cannot be achieved while social and economic deprivations persist.

Within the Latin America Caribbean (LAC) region, the economic crisis of 2008 helped recognize this as countries opted to use social investment to minimize socioeconomic consequences of the recession. In her presentation to the Expert Group Meeting on the priority theme of the 53rd & 54th sessions of the Commission for Social Development dated May 19, 2015, Simone Cecchini of the Economic Commission of Latin American and the Caribbean (ECLAC) noted that the region gradually increased the coverage of social protection for its communities, adopting legal tools that ensured a transition from needs-based social policies to actual social rights that apply to everyone. Within the Dominican Republic this was evidenced by the Adoption of the 2010 Constitution which provided such social rights under article 39. In a 2015 statistic entitled “*América Latina: evolución de la pobreza y de la indigencia, 1980-2014*” ECLAC confirmed that these efforts have led to a decrease in the level of people living below the poverty line (40.5% of the population in 1980 compared to 28% in 2013), the region remains the area with the most inequality in the world, as 167 million people continue to live below the poverty line. As an organization whose mission it is to promote the sustainable development of the Dominican Republic, the Global Foundation for Democracy and Development (GFDD) calls for a social development paradigm which promotes innovative social policies leading to access to education, job creation and the public participation and empowerment of all individuals and communities, so they can share the burdens and the benefits of economic growth.

Also raised in her May 19 presentation to the Expert Group Meeting on the priority theme of the 53rd & 54th sessions of the Commission for Social Development, Ms. Cecchini noted that within the LAC region, most countries have today extended the ages of free education coverage towards preschool children (3-6 years old). However, with forecasts predicting low economic growth for 2015 of 1% as reported in ECLAC’s 2014 Preliminary Overview of the Economies of Latin America and the Caribbean, it is essential for all stakeholders, including civil society, to complement government efforts if we are to truly break the cycle of poverty and achieve lasting development. The CARE foundation in Peru, through its program *Girls with Opportunities (Niñas con Oportunidades)* is an example of civil

society organizations within the LAC region that are working directly with local communities to ensure that young girls can complete their education and achieve a better future. CARE notes that improvement in education has a beneficial knock on to other sectors such public health, as the foundation, quoting a 1994 World Bank paper entitled “Investing in All the People: Educating Women in Developing Countries” remarks that children whose mothers have gone to school are 40% more likely to live beyond the age of 5. Moving beyond traditional educational social policy functions, policies that also incorporate environmental concerns are also an effective way to support sustainable development efforts. GFDD’s Eco-Huertos program, is a grassroots initiative supporting the creation of organic and sustainable vegetable gardens in schools and communities throughout the country. The workshops that are provided educate members on the principles of sustainable agriculture and how to create and maintain a vegetable garden. With the aim of developing this program on a national scale, GFDD is helping local families learn sustainable agriculture practices that can then be applied at home, enabling them to not only supplement their diets, but generate income for the community as well.

Policies and partnerships that promote job creation and economic empowerment are the next step in our social development paradigm. Within the Dominican Republic, international organizations like the UN Development Program (UNDP) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) have regularly partnered with the government and civil society organizations to help stimulate sustainable development. Published in a recent UNDP Dominican Republic (UNDP DR) press release dated August 18, a partnership between the UN programme and Fundación Popular seeks to promote the economic, financial and social inclusion of some 3,000 women from poor communities in the municipality of Mao, in the Valverde province of the country. Involving around 30 civil society organizations in the area, the initiative will seek to train the women in areas such as environmental sustainability, management finance and entrepreneurship to learn more about environmental sustainability and improve their economic autonomy and increase their participation in local production. As the largest source of development financing for Latin American, the IDB is another example of a valuable player in this paradigm, being currently involved in a \$817,000-dollar investment project to help create an Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan within the Dominican Republic, and implement an inclusive recycling pilot project in 4 municipalities in the country. The program will create employment in the poorest municipalities in the country while providing a sustainable waste management system. GFDD itself is an active proponent of recycling opportunities. Its ReCreate program is an illustration of how local productivity and social inclusion can be combined to have a positive impact on the country’s sustainable development. Developed in 2012, this unique program offers women, youth and children across the Dominican Republic workshops in art recycling. It demonstrates how recycling waste into art can empower individuals and communities alike. Upon completion, the program equips individuals and their communities with the opportunity to launch their own ventures, turning this educational project into a source of income and entrepreneurship.

Finally, empowerment of individuals and local communities through innovative social programs constitute the essential part of this development paradigm. Initiatives like ReCreate provide strong evidence of the need to provide disadvantaged groups with tools to achieve integration into local decision making,

particularly when they stand at an occupational disadvantage compared to men. The same principle applies to individuals affected by disability, who are often rejected by society when institutional tools are not implemented to protect the valuable role they play. Civil society organizations like foundation Francina Hungria in the Dominican Republic have played a strong role in promoting the rights of disabled people and the valuable economic role they fulfil in society. A victim of street crime that left her blind several years ago, Francina Hungria has since found the strength to live with her disability and set up a foundation which strives to enhance street mobility of disabled people in Santo Domingo. Francina is working on getting approval for a Bilingual School of Technology, which will help blind children in a positive way, allowing boys and girls from the various provinces to have the opportunity to integrate into society and use technology to play key role in the development of the country.

The education and engagement of individuals, together with the development of local economies, clearly constitutes a vital development paradigm for ensuring the promotion of sustainable development in both developed and developing countries across the world. However, as can be seen from the actions of civil society organizations like GFDD, this transition will only be effective if it is supported at both the national and the local levels by each relevant stakeholder in both the public and the private sectors.

GFDD hopes that this statement will help provide further guidance to the attendees of the 54th session of the Commission for Social Development.

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