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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 IUS PRIMI VIRI International Association, 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

Ius Primi Viri, an international human rights education association based in Rome, endorses the priority theme of the Fifty-Fourth Session of the Commission for Social Development, “Rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world”. The recent 70th Anniversary of the signing of the UN Charter reminds us of the UN’s antecedents in the United Nations Alliance and the commitment made then to the economic and social stability that can accompany social and economic development.

Social justice inherently values relative equity rather than extreme disparities. It is a prominent agenda of the United Nations, as well as its Economic and Social Council, as implied in the “International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights” that was adopted by a resolution of the General Assembly in 1966 and went into force in 1976. Although the term social justice is not contained in this document, many of the dimensions associated with social justice are explicitly stated, among them: equal rights of women and men, the right to work and to form trade unions, the rights to social security, food, clothing, housing, physical and mental health, and education. The covenant assigns the Economic and Social Council responsibilities for receiving reports relating to human rights from States Parties (the signatories of the covenant) as well as from UN agencies and for making reports and recommendations to the General Assembly and the other UN organs. Beyond that, this international covenant gives ECOSOC the central role in monitoring its implementation, a task ECOSOC delegated by resolution in 1985 to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), initiated by the UN Declaration adopted by the General Assembly in 2000, identified quantified targets for their achievement by 2015. The Sustainable Development Goals for the period 2015 to 2030, like the MDGs, give priority to poverty eradication. Rather than seeing poverty as caused by individual factors — instead of praising or blaming individuals for their success or failure — the implicit explanation is social and/or structural. Rather than explaining poverty by factors such as luck or fate, or dismissing it as “the way life is”, for example, poverty is explicitly understood as an outcome of social structures and processes. Rather than blaming the victims of poverty for their condition or suggesting that individuals adapt to their impoverishment, poverty is understood as capable of solution through economic and social change. Poverty is seen not only as problematic but also as being capable of solution. Its solutions imply social and economic change rather than individual adaptations to being poor or unemployed.

It is difficult to overestimate the possible catalytic effect of the memorialization in the SDGs of this understanding of the problem of poverty, an extreme form of economic inequality, as being soluble through structural change.
