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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: Socially just transition towards sustainable
development: the role of digital technologies on social
development and well-being of all**

Statement submitted by AIM Education & Research Society, 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

In accordance to the provisional agenda and documentation for the fifty-ninth session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD59), AIM Research & Education Society (AIM), an education organization with the objective to leverage financial resources, livelihood support, and public services for the rural poor, welcomes the priority theme of Commission on “Socially just transition towards sustainable development: the role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all”.

As highlighted in the Expert Group Meeting (August 2020), areas of attention include inequality and the growing digital divide. As the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted devastating impacts on social development around the world, especially in the most vulnerable communities, the intersectionality of socioeconomic (income and non-income) inequalities are closely associated with the lack of policies to reduce the gap in ICTs which directly impact access and quality to and of education.

We recognize that the global community is transitioning towards a knowledge-based economy that requires educated and skilled talent. The competitive edge is and will be determined by the ability to create, share, and use knowledge effectively. We believe that a knowledge-based workforce is required to develop and handle advanced and complex technologies and would enable world’s developing economies in becoming robust. Therefore, we believe that the crop of efficient and talented individuals, our young adults, is the very catalyst that will become the driving force for all future innovations and growth. Therefore, to assist the Government of India in achieving the target (outlined in its plan) of creating 500 million skilled workers by 2030 (as aligned with the UN SDGs), AIM provides access and quality to competitive education and skill training across the State of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana by making education affordable and reachable to those in dire need, especially within the minority communities.

Although we are encouraged by Member State India’s comprehensive national and regional plans of and to prioritize education and skill-training (as evident by the rising middle class), **we urge** participants to further deepen the normative basis with fostering a collective behaviour, civil society voice and accountability to ensure minority participation towards securing a socially just transition towards an inclusive development that ensures dignity and equality.

We reaffirm the Commission’s fifty-ninth Expert Group outcome that although rapid digital transformation advances social progress, it also introduces the need for better policy formulation around human rights and security, threats to personal privacy and dignity and freedom. AIM advocates and monitors digital governance to ensure transparency, trust and accountability in how technologies and data within the institution are managed and utilized.

We realize the widening of inequality at large, with an increasing concentration on wealth and influence on policy. Inequality in all its dimensions – in income, wealth, access to education, healthcare, safe drinking water and sanitation, sufficient, safe and nutritious food, social protection or ICTs – we believe, is in fact a substantial barrier towards achieving sustainable development. Therefore, we encourage the modalities of uplifting and rehabilitating underprivileged children, girls, women and youth, especially within the minority communities – both on the national and international level, with the vision that is task-oriented and focused on service leadership and humanity. AIM continues to address issues pertaining to the common resident and to bring individual concerns to the notice of both the state and central Government of India. By advocating and monitoring policies through provision of

information, we utilize an inclusive and holistic multi-stakeholder platform, particularly in the context of women and girls.

We reaffirm the EGM Regional Breakout Session of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP)'s recommendations to improve digital inclusion by developing technological infrastructures, providing affordable access, enhancing digital skills among excluded and disadvantaged groups; identifying connected and unconnected communities; understanding the specific needs of different groups in disadvantaged or vulnerable situations; ensuring that easy and affordable access to digital technology not endanger personal privacy, dignity, and freedom; mainstreaming digital technology policies and programmes into general public policy development and implementations; creating public-private partnerships with the involvement of civil society, groups in disadvantaged or vulnerable situations, and building on volunteerism within societies; strengthening evidence-based policymaking; developing a whole-of government approach that connects different government entities and develops and implements digital technologies plans and policies.

We urge all participants to accelerate commitments to the closing the digital divide, in all its forms and dimensions of inequality and to build trust in both digital technology in government as we, part of the global community, find ourselves at a critical juncture to take action if we are to realize a socially just transition towards a new paradigm.
