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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: Inclusive and resilient recovery from
COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well-being, and
dignity for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all its
forms and dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda**

Statement submitted by the Hellenic Association of Political Scientists, 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 a post-pandemic world, the effects of poverty and hunger have been intensified to an alarming degree. The outbreak of COVID-19, along with the restrictive measures implemented across the world to prevent a further spread of the new virus came to disrupt every facet of life globally. Indicatively, the COVID-19 regulations have served to disrupt the lines of product distribution (including basic necessities), while they have also resulted in increased unemployment, especially for those who were not able to work remotely. Moreover, financial activities globally have also been constantly slowing suffering great losses with many enterprises being forced to close. This has, in turn, led to a further increase of unemployment. Apart from that, the pre-existing factors contributing to the persistence of poverty and hunger got intensified, exacerbating basic grievances that vulnerable groups were already experiencing. Therefore, the states around the world are now facing the immediate necessity of dealing with and limiting these destabilizing conditions.

It cannot be neglected that in a pre-pandemic context there had been much progress for the alleviation of poverty and hunger in the context of the United Nations 2030 Agenda. Acknowledging the importance of sustaining these efforts throughout the gradual transition to normalcy that many states undergo, the Hellenic Association of Political Scientists intends to provide a set of possible supportive proposals by submitting the present statement to the Commission of Social Development.

Firstly, as far as the mitigation of poverty is concerned, the Hellenic Association of Political Scientists believes that coordinated policy efforts which aim for a wider and more equal distribution of vaccines against COVID-19 should be prioritized. The gradual global resumption of production and return of employees to work cannot efficiently contribute to setting poverty under control when the poorer nations are still experiencing very low vaccination rates. For the positive externalities of the vaccination process to be maximized an equal access to the vaccine for all states must remain a priority. Simultaneously, investments that will support the health care sector in developing countries stemming from international organizations and states alike would be more than welcome so as to reinforce poorer economies' ability to manage emergency health hazards. However, as the COVID-19 experience proved, it was not only poorer states but also the developed world that was caught unprepared by the pandemic. In this context, the Hellenic Association of Political Scientists sees the development of emergence prepared health systems as of paramount importance for a more resilient future.

Additionally, enabling people to get out of the poverty trap also entails the substantive support and protection of the vulnerable segments of the population. The restrictive measures against COVID-19 did not only lead to increased unemployment and intensified food insecurity, as mentioned above. It also came to be also associated with increased domestic violence against women. It is in relation to these socially deteriorating phenomena that the designing and expansion of social welfare programmes must become a priority for national governments around the world. For instance, states could contribute to individuals' effort for employment by exposing them to a set of soft skills as well as by offering them access to technological literacy. To that end, the Hellenic Association of Political Scientists encourages the arrangement of extracurricular life-long opportunities and provision of training scholarships as a way of enhancing potential labor's qualifications and job searching skills. Similarly speaking, it is time for states to invest in the development of services for the care and protection of survivors of domestic violence that proved to be essential amid COVID-19. This requires a collective effort through the cooperation of governments, civil society organizations and women's groups which are usually the providers of such services. Not only should the states make urgent funding for the support of such service available but also advocate with the civil society. It is meaningful to stress the importance of making all these efforts adaptive to the needs of the population and accessible throughout both rural and urban areas.

Given the intertwined relationship between poverty and hunger, the international community should pursue SDGs1 and 2 within a combined framework of action to achieve an inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19. Firstly, the Hellenic Association of Political Scientists salutes the agreement between the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the UN World Food Programme and the US Peace Corps aiming at guaranteeing food security in conflict zones through international cooperation. It also calls for further support of the initiative so that it succeeds in its objectives. That effort could be expanded by investing in further research on agriculture's vulnerability to climate change, and examination of regionally appropriate responses to climate change and food security.

Secondly, seeing foreign direct investment in developing countries agriculture as part of the toolkit toward combating food insecurity, the Hellenic Association calls for the consideration of land rights and therefore the locals' capacity to have ownership over their resources. Instances of land-grabbing by powerful investors should be restricted through effective national and international monitoring mechanisms that ensure compliance with indigenous people's rights. Accessible databases that include records of land deals should be developed in order for transparency to be achieved. Finally, departing from the academic debate on colonial perceptions of hunger, the Hellenic Association of Political Scientists would perceive a relevant discussion in the context of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee of the General Assembly as useful.

Besides the enhancement of the existing framework there is also a set of other actions that could be taken. First of all, an International Pool of Resources related to food production should be created along with a system that allocates a percentage of a surplus of resources from a state x to a state y, which faces a deficit. In that way, the industry of the latter state would not only be receiving final food products but would also be involved in their manufacturing, possibly even able to employ more people and utilise new methods that were previously unavailable. Another possible proposal would be the drafting of specific food production action plans stemming from the collective efforts of the government, of experts and of the civil society. These plans would in turn be set to a referendum. Upon wide approval, they would be implemented with the active support of the majority. In addition to that, there should also be an informal forum in which the relevant stakeholders can exchange good practices from already implemented action plans. Finally, civil society efforts – such as but not limited to the provision of free meals and grocery stores that offer a variety of products without charge, or initiatives aiming to the reduction of food-waste – could be supported by their respective states and the United Nations. That could be achieved through having them sponsoring online and offline campaigns, raising awareness for hunger and providing opportunities for people to actively contribute to its alleviation. In that manner, the campaigns would gain more credibility and the general public would become more sensitised and better aware of community-based actions. In addition to that, there is also a need for community-based networking and coordination of all the groups combating hunger so that there is no duplication of efforts and there is also an exchange of good practices.

In conclusion, it would be utopian to expect that simple solutions exist to any challenging problem, especially in a world struggling to recover from the COVID-19 crisis. All the aforementioned proposals require a significant amount of time and collective interstate and intrastate efforts to bear fruit. The Hellenic Association of Political Scientists is grateful for having had the opportunity to express its views on the topic of sustainably recovering from COVID-19 by eradicating poverty and hunger, addressing the Commission of Social Development.