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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 World Youth Alliance, 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

The World Youth Alliance is a global coalition of young people dedicated to promoting the dignity of the human person in policy and culture and committed to building solidarity between young people of developing and developed countries.

All human beings are equal in dignity and therefore deserve respect, opportunities, and the freedom to use their abilities and talents. Countries and communities may take different paths to reach inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well-being, and dignity for all. At the World Youth Alliance, we believe that when people understand human dignity – the intrinsic and equal value of every human being – they strive to create conditions that include everyone and enable all to thrive. Therefore, human dignity must be at the foundation of our efforts.

This human dignity centered approach is reflected in the well-established principle that development must be person-centered. It is the intrinsic worth of the human person that provides the basis to create policies and laws that establish conditions under which human beings can flourish. Therefore, we must work together in solidarity to include and respect every human being in our efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development.

As the world is combating COVID-19, the World Youth Alliance recognizes several challenges which are incredibly unique to this moment in history, and which impede the achievement of sustainable livelihoods, well-being, and dignity for marginalized groups. The combination of heightened sanitary measures and physical distancing has reinforced mental health struggles due to isolation and separation. These government measures have also created physical barriers for communities of homeless, poor, or disabled persons to access essential services.

In light of these struggles, the World Youth Alliance emphasizes the importance of solidarity between all states, communities, families, and individuals in ensuring a resilient and inclusive environment during the process of post-COVID-19 recovery. No single person should be left behind. In the post-COVID-19 development stage, people must be treated as solutions, rather than problems. Authentic development is a person-centered process that takes place at all levels of society creating a social, political, and economic environment that allows persons to reach their full physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional potential.

The World Youth Alliance encourages an active response from all levels of society: states, regions, families, and persons. States must act collaboratively to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). When providing foreign aid related to livelihood, well-being, and dignity for all, this should not be coercive or conditional on the involuntary implementation of policies that are inappropriate for individual states. Regions should form a clear understanding of their conditions and needs and select strategies that fit their local contexts and address their specific demands. Families are the fundamental unit to nourish and cultivate the potential of younger generations and teach them to make responsible decisions. Finally, persons are the ultimate actors who have the power to inform and shape policies and the quality of their implementation. Active collaboration among all the above-mentioned levels is the key to authentic, integral human development.

The World Youth Alliance supports providing an adequate standard of living addressed in article 11 in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights in order to meet the basic needs of marginalized groups. These needs include adequate, safe, and affordable housing (SDG 11), food (SDG2), health care (SDG3), education (SDG4) and clean water (SDG 6). Policies that treat persons as

part of a problem to be solved rather than participants in development detract from these essential efforts. Policymakers and society in general can easily marginalize and discriminate against vulnerable groups, such as homeless persons, even though the latter deserve responses that meet their needs and enable them to participate fully in society. By creating policies that benefit disadvantaged groups, it is important to be aware that a person has the ability to contribute to development. Ensuring dignified living conditions is essential for allowing human beings to flourish, their hard-work and creativity leading to endless new possibilities.

Access to quality education is another facet of the person-centered development promoted by the World Youth Alliance. Draft resolution III from the fifty-seventh session of the Commission for Social Development stated in paragraph 10 that “education about human dignity” must be available to all. Education requires an authentic understanding of the human person and must seek to foster solidarity and respect for oneself and others. Parents bear the primary responsibility for educating their children and the State should support them in fulfilling this role.

The World Youth Alliance developed a curriculum to promote respect, responsible behavior, and equality between men and women, meeting the afore mentioned call for “education about human dignity.” The Human Dignity Curriculum (HDC) teaches children that every human being has dignity and should therefore be respected. The program is culturally sensitive and encourages parental involvement. Students who understand human dignity are not only prepared to make responsible personal decisions, but they contribute to their communities and treat their friends, families, peer groups, and communities with respect.

The World Youth Alliance also believes a right to the highest attainable standard of health is critical for person-centered sustainable development. Health affects individuals’ participation in the work and social spheres. Poor health can detract from the ability to receive an education and hurt one’s ability to participate in the workforce and community life. Ensuring that everyone has access to good healthcare should be part of social protection policies.

The World Youth Alliance emphasizes that a comprehensive approach to evaluating individual health conditions is crucial to respond to diverse needs. Good health requires not only medical care, but also clean water, sanitation, and good nutrition. Appropriate levels of education are also necessary for people to comprehend medical advice and make informed decisions. Vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities and conflict-affected populations are disproportionately affected by under-resourced environments, as well as by lack of access to healthcare and education.

Economist Michael Fairbanks identified seven forms of capital that people need to access in order to thrive. Among the seven, it is essential to highlight human capital, which represents skills, insights, and capabilities. The development of human capital is fundamental to the development of our societies, and which is why it must be prioritized among the most vulnerable members in order to leave no one behind. This form of capital aligns with most of the Sustainable Development Goals, making it a fundamental approach to fulfill the 2030 Agenda in a timely manner.

The World Youth Alliance recognizes that human beings are our greatest resource to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and in particular sustainable livelihoods, well-being, and dignity for all. As the world of work continues to evolve, it is important to ensure that we include people in all spheres of life. By grounding our efforts in human dignity and building person-centered policies, we can equip all human beings to be problem-solvers. Thus empowered, everyone can contribute to the development of their communities using their unique capacities and gifts.

The World Youth Alliance urges the Commission to promote policies which ensure that all people have access to basic needs, healthcare, and quality education on human dignity. One resource that we offer is our Human Dignity Curriculum. Programs like this one are a starting point to build various forms of capital, particularly the human one, in order to promote resilient and inclusive recovery from COVID-19 and foster sustainable livelihoods and dignity for all.
