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Priority Theme: “Fostering social development and social justice through social policies to accelerate progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to achieve the overarching goal of poverty eradication”

Statement submitted by Casa Generalizia della Societa' del Sacro Cuore; Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul; Congregation of the Mission; Congregations of St. Joseph; Dominican Leadership Conference; Edmund Rice International; Fondazione Proclade Internazionale – Onlus; Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Loreto Generalate; International Presentation Association; Loretto Community (Sisters of Loretto); Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers; Passionists International; Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary; Salesian Missions, Inc.; School Sisters of Notre Dame; Sisters of Charity Federation; Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur; Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries; UNANIMA International; and VIVAT International, 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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

We, members of the Justice Coalition of Religious, are a coalition of NGOs who represent the socioeconomic- and environmental-justice mission of over 200 congregations of Catholic Sisters, Brothers, priests, and their partners in mission. Our congregations are dedicated to the service of peoples who are living in poverty, vulnerability, and marginalisation around the globe. Their countless ministries aim to uphold the human dignity of each person and to promote the common good, which is inextricable from the well-being of Earth's ecosystems. We are grateful for the opportunity provided by this 62nd Commission on Social Development to lend experiences and insights from our global community to their consideration of poverty eradication through social policies that coherently and concurrently support social development, social justice, and sustainable development.

Our members have observed a variety of obstacles to movement out of poverty that the communities they serve are facing, including:

- **Indonesia:** The financing of development favours “downstream development” enterprise (e.g. hotels) over “upstream development” (e.g. farming, fishing), giving greater state-fund access to large holders of financial capital than to stewards of natural capital. These development policies fail to recognise and support upstream sustainable-development agents and render them inordinately vulnerable to rampant land- and resource-grabbing, forced evictions, and asset confiscation by downstream developers. Their ultimate effect is homelessness, social destabilisation, and economic paralysis of upstream peoples and destruction of their ecosystems. Further, extractive industries of coal and gold mining and large-scale oil palm plantations have seized control of community-owned land and forests, resulting in loss of livelihoods for the Kalimantan Dayak indigenous community.
- **Venezuela:** A mentality of hopelessness is a significant barrier to the economic empowerment that is particularly virulent among those who do not have access to education and those who have not had access to meeting spaces in which they can develop and share communal solutions to the forms of poverty in which they live.
- **Kenya:** Laws on land inheritance prevent single mothers, widows, and married women without sons from inheriting or holding land on which they could engage in subsistence farming or engaging in other enterprise to generate income for themselves and their families in addition to providing a stable place of residence for them. In addition, many people are economically hindered by a persistent inability to return to land from which they were internally displaced by tribal clashes in 2007.
- **Trinidad & Tobago:** The cultural, consumerist ideals of “development” from the Global-North continue to become globalised and increasingly entrenched via colonial legacies and domination of media and advertising platforms. Additionally, domestic resources designated to meet social needs are strained when they must also support a large influx of asylum-seekers without proportionate support from the international community.
- **Timor-Leste:** Decreases in rainfall and lack of water transport infrastructure have rendered farmers' land impossible to irrigate. Those who can generate a harvest suffer from lack of access to markets due to insufficient roads or transport fees that outweigh the local market value of the product they would sell. Additionally, young people, even those with an education, are unable to find gainful employment.

- Canada: Where income, housing, and food programs have been established, intersecting barriers, including systemic racism, gender and disability, persist and impact single mothers, Indigenous and African Canadians, and persons with disabilities most deeply.
- India and Slovakia: Indigenous tea plantation workers and their children (India) and the Roma community (Slovakia) are particularly at risk of poverty due to lack of access to quality education, of maternal and other health services, of livelihood opportunities, and of labour protection. These disadvantages intersect to create extreme vulnerability to unjust or exploitative labour practices and make it difficult for these groups to earn steady income and even more difficult to earn a just wage.
- Guatemala: In the dry corridor, which belongs to the Mayan people, droughts have made farming impossible and forced farmers to migrate to other latitudes. A history of genocide and ongoing political persecution against Mayan people also plagues Guatemalans in this region. Long-term corruption has siphoned state resources to the interests of the elite and prevented equitable distribution of those resources across all sectors of society, including through exclusion of Mayans from public benefits.
- Democratic Republic of the Congo: The education system's lack of adequate infrastructure, teaching resources, innovative learning opportunities, and employment prospects make young people especially vulnerable to poverty. Women and girls face added obstacles of gender-based discrimination, domestic violence, and limited access to economic resources. In rural communities, lack of basic infrastructure for water, electricity, and health services as well as ongoing threat of armed conflict and displacement also impede economic security.

Our observations highlight poverty's role as both a cause and an effect of human-rights violations. Further, they illustrate that the world's largest economies and consumers bear responsibility for poverty's causes and manifestations in smaller economies. We therefore present the following recommendations to all UN Member States, each of whom bears the duty to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights in their own territories and to contribute to an international order in which human rights are enjoyed by every person:

- Facilitate access of small-holding farmers and entrepreneurs to irrigation systems, urban markets (via sufficient roads and affordable transport options) and to international markets (via fair trade agreements upholding workers' rights)
- Organize and incentivise investors to offer vocational training, access to microcredit, and support for local entrepreneurship in marginalised and remote communities
- Remove all legislative barriers to women's ownership of land and support community-based deconstruction of stigmas and traditions preserving de facto barriers to it
- Establish a liveable minimum wage and guarantee basic income through a public fund and distribution mechanism that is need-based, trauma-informed, and responsive to outreach needs of poverty-burdened communities
- Foster the establishment of – and channel international and domestic social-service funding through – community-based women's networks (e.g. Kudumbashree networks in India, Ethiopia, and South Africa)

- Adopt a rights-based, comprehensive national approach to poverty eradication that includes measurable targets, timelines, and transparent reporting mechanisms consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals and evaluate progress through a peacebuilding lens
- Dedicate public funds to establishing or preserving community centers for all community-based associations and organizations aligned with human rights and sustainable development
- Offer essential social services according to need regardless of migratory status
- Fully fund, in proportion to States' common but differentiated responsibilities, all funds of the Framework Convention on Climate Change's financial mechanism and all UN agencies' budgetary requirements for the fulfilment of the social protection needs of refugees and asylum-seekers
- End all subsidies for fossil fuel extraction and incentivise clean-energy development and reforestation
- Integrate peacebuilding and anti-poverty initiatives, prioritising and investing in leadership of rural and indigenous women and children in both
- Enlist leadership from poverty-burdened groups in each locality for building and renovating school infrastructures, training teachers, and tailoring learning programs to local realities and needs
- Prioritise health and education centers in extension of electricity and internet to rural communities
- Establish regular migratory pathway for climate-displaced persons and lower ceilings on remittance fees
- Enact the SDG Stimulus Plan for international debt relief

We look forward to collaborating with Member States in pursuit of all measures to replace the chains of poverty with a web of solidarity and possibilities for all.
