



UNDERSTANDING THE RESOLUTION ON  
“ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES AND CHALLENGES TO SOCIAL INCLUSION  
THROUGH FISCAL, WAGE AND SOCIAL PROTECTION”

From February 11th to 21st, 2019, the 57th session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD57) took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City under the priority theme: “Addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies.” A draft resolution on this priority was submitted by the Chair of the Commission, Cheikh Niang (Ambassador of Senegal to the United Nations), on the basis of informal consultations and was recommended for adoption by the Economic and Social Council.

The objective of this document is to highlight the main themes (1° equality in opportunity and access; 2° labour market and decent wage; 3° social protection; 4° means of implementation and resources mobilizations) that emerged from this resolution including potential policy recommendations for Member States to address inequalities and challenges to social inclusion.

As UN resolutions can sometimes be difficult to read, deciphering the UN language and universalizing the content of this resolution is crucial to ensuring that regional, national, and local civil society organizations can monitor the progress achieved by governments and remind Member States of their commitments when further political action is needed.

Highlights of the resolution:

- **Equality in opportunity and access - (OP 1-10)**

Introduction: The text of the resolution begins by reminding readers of all the agreements that came before, highlighting that “eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.” The resolution also emphasizes the importance of financing and creating an enabling environment in which transformative policies can be implemented. A few important issues were raised in the resolution itself:

1. Ensure that growth translates into a reduction of inequalities
2. Eradication of poverty must align with full and freely chosen employment
3. Sustainable development requires the meaningful involvement and active participation of all, especially those who are vulnerable or marginalized.
4. Growing inequality hinders the achievement of sustainable development as well as the eradication of poverty.
5. Inequality has a number of different dimensions: ethical, social, political, environmental, and economic.

### *What's in the resolution?*

A large range of industries were mentioned explicitly in terms of programs and policies: health, agriculture, infrastructure, education, care work, housing, employment, information and communications technology. Additionally, helpful financial principles were identified: fairness, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of tax systems, progressive taxation, integration of the informal sector into the formal economy, and reduction of tax evasion. One paragraph specifically discussed budgeting and procurement while another cautioned against spending cuts and instead called for carefully designed policies. A long list of disadvantaged groups were identified in addition to numerous gaps and obstacles to reducing inequality.

The complexity of economic inequality was mentioned in that it is high but declining among countries; within countries the picture is mixed, and the dimensions along which this is measured can both be on income as well as wealth. Furthermore, it was importantly stated that high levels of inequality in numerous dimensions negatively affect economic activity and reduce social mobility. The cycle of poverty - whereby poverty begets poverty - was also emphasized.

The UN urged a commitment to achieve universal social protection, as nationally appropriate, that can carry out human rights for all, especially to those “trapped in poverty and those who are vulnerable or marginalized and subject to discrimination.” Additionally, social services and social protection floors can contribute to reduce poverty and social exclusion. Regardless of the type of social protection - and many were identified - it seems to have a positive net impact on those most vulnerable. Unfortunately, this reality is not being put into practice.

The UN has acknowledged that even short-term improvements in living standards have long-term positive impacts such as reducing vulnerability to economic downturns and strengthening resilience. Therefore, comprehensive policies, such as social transfers and job creation programs, were called for.

The UN did not only call for all of these new policies and programs, it also stated that there needs to be structural transformation that touches on industrialization, agriculture, and infrastructure. The UN “encourages governments, the international community and other relevant actors, including workers’ and employer’s organizations, as applicable, to ensure equal opportunity, reduce inequalities of outcome and combat discrimination and social exclusion, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action.”

The resolution not only stated that there are not enough financial resources to expand social protection, but also stated that these policies generate fiscal prosperity. This tension needs to be further discussed as it seems they are using the problem itself (lack of resources) to prevent the solution to the problem (social protection).

- **Labor Market and Decent Wage (OP 11-13)**

Introduction: The labor market and implementation of decent wage was underscored by the UN in the global context of austerity measures that governments use to lower their budget deficits through increases in taxes and spending cuts.

### *What's in the resolution?*

In terms of labor market and decent wage, the resolution highlights various policies, mechanisms and actions to promote social inclusion, decent work for all, increased wages, and more equitable gains for all from maintained sustainable economic growth. Each of the outcomes relating to the labor market and decent wage specifically identify vulnerable groups such as “women, children, young people, indigenous peoples, local communities, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees,

internally displaced persons, persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and people of African descent” onto whom the outcomes should be centered around.

The UN further urged member states to eliminate barriers to social inclusion and to promote the full and productive participation of all aspects of society. Labor market policies such as minimum wage, which entails a baseline for labor pay, and income growth policies that take into account the role of workers’ and employers’ organizations are needed to be adopted as mechanisms to strengthen institutions and provide adequate labor protection for all workers. There is also a strong focus on gender equality which includes, but is not limited to providing women and girls, some of whom may have disabilities, with equal access to education and healthcare and eradicating gender-based discrimination in the workplace. The resolution calls for the promotion of equal work as well as informal work, childcare facilities, the reconciliation of family and professional life, and parents’ balanced share of responsibilities.

- **Social Protection (OP 15-23)**

Introduction: Social Protection is a human right that consists of policies and programs made in order to reduce poverty and vulnerability, including exposure to risks like exclusion, disability, gender, old age, and unemployment. Over 55% of the global population -4 billion people- are left unprotected by social protection. (World Social Protection Report 2017/19: Universal Social Protection to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals). As social protection is a human right for all, all nations are urged to ensure that one’s human rights, irrespective of gender and age are protected by forming national policies and laws in accordance with international human rights’ law.

*What’s in the resolution?*

In these OPs, the UN invites governments to build social protection systems for all as a tool for providing financial access to resources and coverage throughout all life stages, ultimately reducing inequalities and discrimination to eradicate poverty and social exclusion. Social protection floors, with fiscal sustainability in mind, were suggested to prevent people from falling below a certain level of income that will affect their human dignity, rights, and access to basic services such as education, health, and decent housing. The UN encouraged governments to design and implement effective policies and programs that will reduce unequal opportunities and guarantee access to vital goods and services for all vulnerable populations including mothers, children, and the elderly. Specifically, a lifecycle approach was underscored with special attention to gender-equal child care.

The resolution also highlighted the significance of investing in family-oriented programs in eradicating social exclusion and poverty, which include education, training, decent work, work-family balance, health care, social services, intergenerational solidarity, and targeted cash transfers for vulnerable families who are headed by single parents and women in particular. Age, disability, and gender sensitive universal social protection systems as well as targeted programs including cash transfers are necessary to protect these vulnerable families. These measures should be accompanied by access to basic services, high-quality education, and health services. Governments must specifically reduce the burden of disease and improve the well-being of their people by providing universal social protection systems for quality health coverage such as providing safe drinking water and sanitation, improving nutrition, and increasing child immunization and diagnosis/treatment programs to name a few.

The UN continued to call for social protection floors, in accordance with National circumstances, to further expand access to health care and basic income security for older persons in addition to children, newborns, and to those in maternity and long-term or palliative care. Similarly, the UN stated that governments need to design and implement, monitor, and evaluate social protection as a human right, through gender, age and disability mainstreaming.

The UN further stated that social protection is needed for formal and informal sectors in order to bring informal workers into the formal economy; at the same time, better coordination of social protection policies and measures in accordance with poverty reduction programs and other social policies were called for in order to avoid excluding people in informal or precarious jobs.

Furthermore, according to national circumstances, the UN invited Member States to formulate and implement national strategies intended to extend to all social security and essential social services. These strategies need to be sustainable and focused on those furthest below the poverty line and/or negatively affected by climate change and natural/man-made disasters.

- **Means of Implementation, Resources Mobilization and Partnerships (OPs 30-39)**

Introduction: The “Means of Implementation” refer to the ways in which finance, trade, science, technology and innovation contribute to actively addressing poverty and transforming policies. It can also include inclusive and equitable globalization and trade, regional integration, the creation of a national enabling environment, policy and institutional coherence, and multi-stakeholder partnerships needed to achieve the cooperation between multiple parties for changing policies.

*What’s in the resolution?*

Multiple “Means of Implementation,” or the resources, mobilization, and partnerships needed to realize social development, were established in the resolution. The UN highlighted many financing options and actionable items for Member States to implement while still recognizing the crucial role of other financial stakeholders, such as civil society organizations and the private sector.

The UN stated that all resources of financing - whether public, private, domestic, or international - are critical to achieve the 2030 Agenda and called for the recognition of the principle of national ownership in domestic resource mobilization as well as the need for developed countries to meet their ODA commitments at the same time. The Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) refers to the financial aid sent by developed countries through their gross national income to developing countries meant to strengthen the developing countries’ human, institutional, and technological capacity.

However, global dynamics today are not only defined by their reliance on international aid as the UN has stated that the contributions of South-South cooperation to policy change forms an increasing part of international cooperation that is complementary between developing nations and is *not* in replacement of North-South cooperation between developing and developed nations. In other words, cooperation between developing countries does not hinder nor further the effects of developed nations assisting them. Rather, it allows for relevant experience and knowledge to contribute to development cooperation.

In the end, the resolution invited all stakeholders, including the United Nations and civil society organizations, to exchange information on policies, programs, and practices in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to ultimately eradicate poverty and reduce inequality and social exclusion.