



# Economic and Social Council

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## Commission for Social Development

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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: “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 Priests for Life, 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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## Statement

Priests for Life acknowledges the urgent need to eradicate poverty and to implement programs and policies that will directly benefit all people, today and in the future, and ensure that no one is left behind.

Priests for Life (PFL) believes that policies to foster social development and social justice to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to achieve the overarching goal of poverty eradication must ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment as declared in Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Priests for Life advocates for social policies that leave no one behind, that respect human dignity and uphold the well-being, dignity, and worth of all, every human life without exception. Social policies form the foundation to eradicate poverty and liberate the 700 million people around the world who live in extreme poverty today.

Priests for Life believes that eradication of poverty must be achieved through actions which do not violate the innate human dignity of others, especially the right to life of girls and boys alive in the womb but not yet born.

Everyone must be included in efforts for poverty eradication and sustainable development. All individuals have the potential to make significant contributions to eradicating poverty; no life is expendable.

Every human life needs to be valued for her or his innate worth and no member of the human family should be stripped of their innate human dignity and denied their most basic right, the right to life, through policies that allow individuals to be marginalized and treated as a problem. Their demise should not ever be considered an acceptable strategy for poverty eradication. The dignity of life needs to be acknowledged and protected throughout the life cycle, from conception to natural death, especially when the vulnerable human being is disabled, elderly or residing in the womb.

Population control, family planning, and reproductive health programs that target the elimination of children through abortion discriminate against children in the womb, and conflict with the Preamble of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which reminds us that the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth. A majority of Member States restricts access to abortion with laws providing varied prenatal legal protection to children.

Mother Teresa, now St. Theresa of Calcutta, when accepting her Nobel Peace Prize spoke about poverty and said she considered the nations who have legalized abortion as being the poorest nations. She explained that they are afraid of the little one, they are afraid of the unborn child, and that the child must die because these countries don't want to feed one more child, to educate one more child.

Poverty eradication requires health care that respects human dignity during all stages of life. Renewed efforts to reduce newborn and maternal mortality are essential including ensuring the presence of skilled childbirth attendants who recognize obstetric emergencies and help women receive critical emergency obstetric care and treatment. Complications from childbirth including hemorrhage, the number one cause of maternal death, must continue to be prevented and treated and mothers provided with essential clean blood transfusions and antibiotics when needed.

The alleviation of hunger and malnutrition as stated in Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger, End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, is one of the most critical ways to alleviate poverty. Malnutrition impedes progress and affects the economic potential of families, communities and countries especially when associated with stunted growth. Malnutrition results in the stunted growth of 165 million children resulting in impaired physical and cognitive development with lasting detriment to the individual and to the economic health of countries.

The elimination of malnutrition during the first 1,000 days of life for a child, from conception to the second birthday, and the provision of nutrition for all women of child-bearing age, will not only save the lives of women and children and contribute to their well-being, but will improve the economies of countries and contribute to the eradication of poverty.

When children thrive, they are empowered to become healthy adults who are better equipped to make meaningful economic contributions to their families, society, and country. Healthy individuals and families are equipped with the stamina necessary for productive and sustainable employment, to attend school, to receive training in job skills, to enjoy improved health and well-being, and are better enabled to resist illness and disease. All contributing to the eradication of poverty.

As the 30th anniversary of the International Year of the Family is celebrated the family must be protected and enabled to function as the core foundation of society critical to poverty eradication and sustained development. Cultures throughout the world recognize the essential role of the family in providing for the basic needs of food, water, shelter, clothing, love, and care. The family, in turn, provides for the very survival of its culture and country and must be protected and assisted in all policies and programs to eradicate poverty.

Priests for Life believes that no individual member of the family ought to be selectively marked as expendable – regardless of disability, disease, age, condition of dependency or stage of development. All members of the family are deserving of protection, including those that have been classified as expendable by some and excluded from basic social protection. No member of the family ought to be stripped of their human dignity and denied their most basic right – the right to life. Life is not just for the privileged, the perfect and the planned but extends to all members of the human family.

Pope Francis in his address to the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 called for respect of all lives. He said that the common home of all men and women must continue to rise on the foundations of a right understanding of universal fraternity and respect for the sacredness of every human life, of every man and every woman, the poor, the elderly, children, the infirm, the unborn, the unemployed, the abandoned, and those considered disposable because they are only considered as part of a statistic.

Priests for Life concurs that our common home rises on the foundations that understand universal fraternity and respect for the sacredness of every human life. We believe that social policies for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achievement of the eradication of poverty need to affirm the wellbeing, dignity and worth of all, every human life without exception, and ensure that no one was left behind and no life was considered disposable.

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