

## **Commission for Social Development 56 Side Event:**

### **POVERTY, A THREAT TO DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE**

Monday 5 February 1:15 – 2:30pm.

#### **Introduction**

Nearly half of the world's population (more than 3 billion people) live on less than US\$2.50 a day. More than 1.3 billion live in extreme poverty (less than US\$1.25 a day). 1 billion children worldwide are living in poverty. According to UNICEF, 22,000 children die each day due to poverty. 805 million people worldwide do not have enough food to eat (<https://www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-global-poverty>). And as Mahatma Gandhi once said, "poverty is the worse form of violence."

In 1986, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on the right to development. The resolution states that: "The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized."

The indignity and sufferings of people living in poverty is a humanitarian tragedy. It is a challenge putting pressure on all societies. Poverty is the root cause of many problems, posing a severe and distinct threat to food security, climate change resilience, insecurity, democracy, human rights amongst others. Poverty erodes countries' capacity to address global challenges, and their potential to fully contribute to the successful implementation of UN SDGs.

#### **Link between Poverty, Democracy, Human rights and Climate Change Resilience**

Empirical evidence suggests that poverty can have an impact on democracy, food security, resilience to climate change, security, human rights.

The overarching goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has been clearly defined as poverty eradication. Poverty and inequalities have been identified by many as one of the biggest threats to democracy and human rights. Many people living in poverty are also victims of injustice and do not have access to legal redress. As such, many of them do not have faith in institutions of democracy as they are not benefiting from the status quo. Large and increasing inequalities also weakens confidence in institutions.

There is a false dichotomy between human rights on one side and socio-economic development on the other. However, this dichotomy does not exist when one takes a holistic view of human rights. The panel will draw the link between the two.

#### **Goal and aims of the panel**

1. Emphasize the broad definition of human rights that draws on the linkages to socio-economic development and thus debunk the false dichotomy.
2. Show how poverty and inequality is a threat to human rights and sustainable development.
3. Share lessons from national experience of strategies for poverty eradication and the protection of human rights.
4. Come up with clear messages and strategies for collectively tackling the challenge of poverty and human rights.

**Questions for discussion:**

1. Is the definition of human rights culturally specific or is there a common understanding that applies to everyone, everywhere?
2. How can the international community bring more coherence in their efforts to promote economic and social development; and human rights?
3. What mechanisms can be used at the national level to promote development and human rights and mitigate conflicts that may arise, especially regarding indigenous communities?

**Panelists:**

1. Frank Kanu, Director, Organization for Poverty Alleviation and Development.
2. Helena Rojas, Director of Development, Botkyrka Municipality, Sweden.
3. Dr. Geneviève Defraigne Tardieu, Director of Advocacy, ATD Fourth World
4. Permanent Mission of Romania
5. Andrew Allimadi, Chief, Civil Society and Outreach Unit, Division for Social Policy and Development