

Statement by H.E. Mr. Mehdi Danesh-Yazdi

**To the
Forty-fifth session of the
Commission for Social Development**

7 February 2007

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish, at the outset, to present you all my best wishes for 2007. May this year bring peace and tranquility to the world and better life for all people across the globe. It is a great honour and privilege for me to be elected Chairperson of the forty-fifth session of the Commission for Social Development. With your support, I will continue to do my best to carry on this important responsibility.

I also wish to thank Ambassador Javier Loayza Barea, the distinguished Permanent Representative of Bolivia, and all the Vice- Chairpersons for their leadership in conducting the business of the forty-fourth session of the Commission. Under their stewardship, the Commission was able to accomplish a lot in fulfilling its mandate. I should not miss this opportunity to thank the Secretariat for the preparation of this session and for the timely dissemination of documents of good quality.

Experience shows us again and again that social development is not merely a desirable option for society; it is a necessity. Social development is considered critical to ensure that people, not economic interests, remain the central focus of overall development efforts. Concern continues to emerge, however, about the costs to society when the integral links between poverty eradication, the promotion of full employment and the fostering of social integration are ignored. It is through failed efforts to advance these inclusive goals that lead to inequality of opportunity and one generation to follow another into poverty.

The commitments made at Copenhagen in 1995, which were reaffirmed at the special session in Geneva five years later and at the 10-year review in 2005, charted a course to reverse the continued marginalization of major parts of the world's population. Yet still today, young people without privilege and wealth struggle to get a foothold in the labour market, and older persons enjoy less and less security for a lifetime of work. In some countries 80 per cent of persons with disabilities are without work, while indigenous peoples and migrants continue to face discriminatory treatment in the labour market.

At the broader level, an increasingly interdependent world is fueling a progressively stratified society. Instead of reaping the economic benefits of progress, many societies are experiencing alarming increases in the discrepancies between rich and poor. This is reflected in the number of unemployed, which globally stands at around 195 million and climbing. It is reflected in the share of capital in total income, which is on the rise, while wages and worker benefits are on the decline. It is reflected in the casualization of the workforce, the abundance of labour supply – bolstered by the forces of globalization – and the even greater mobility of capital. Clearly these are not isolated trends. But as important as it is to review them, we must be equally vigilant in addressing their root cause. If we do not, history teaches us that the lessons learned can be hard and the costs deep.

The priority theme for this and next year's session of the Commission, "Promoting full employment and decent work for all", was given a boost by the World Summit Outcome. Indeed we welcomed its call for full and productive employment and decent work for all to be a central objective of national and international policies, a commitment first affirmed by world leaders at Copenhagen 12 years ago.

The Commission's work is also enhanced by the Ministerial Declaration recently adopted at the Economic and Social Council, which acknowledged that opportunities for men and women to obtain productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity, are essential to eradicate poverty and improve social and economic well-being.

The agenda for this session of the Commission faithfully reflects these intentions. We will be discussing how to carry forward the goal of full employment and decent work for all, and improve the lives and families of older persons and youth, indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities. With our new methods of work we are compelled to go into greater depth to review the multidimensional aspects of employment and place it within the broader debates to advance an inclusive social development.

We will also recognize an important anniversary during this session by commemorating the adoption five years ago of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. And, I would like to take this opportunity to give special recognition of the adoption by the General Assembly of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Governments have sent a clear message that discrimination against persons with disabilities is unacceptable in all its forms and manifestations, and have pledged to take practical steps to prevent and combat it.

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

Let us continue, together with our partners in civil society and the wider UN system, to strengthen the basic pillars of Copenhagen and the principle of a shared social and economic prosperity. Let us strive to address the alarming realities of powerlessness

that shape the lives of ordinary people by ensuring that they are at the centre of development efforts.

It is our hope that all delegations will bear this in mind and work together to produce outcomes that have a practical and real impact. We wish to assure the Commission that our Bureau and the Secretariat will strive to ensure a successful session.

Thank you.