



## **Aide-Mémoire**

### **Expert Group Meeting on “Strategies for Eradicating Poverty to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals”**

United Nations Headquarters, New York  
1 – 3 June 2016

#### **I. Purpose of the meeting**

In its resolution E/CN.5/2016/L.4, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations decided that the priority theme for the 2017-2018 review and policy cycle of the Commission for Social Development would be “Strategies for Eradicating Poverty to Achieve Sustainable Development for All”. In this context, the Division for Social Policy and Development of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) is organizing an Expert Group Meeting on the priority theme of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission, from 1 to 3 June 2016 in New York.

The Commission for Social Development continues to prioritize and give prominence to the review and follow-up of the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development. Furthermore, the Commission will make a vital contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The overarching objective of the 2030 Agenda is to eradicate poverty in all its forms, including extreme poverty. The 2030 Agenda provides a vision of a shared future with equality and opportunities for all, and has pledged to leave no one behind in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In this regard, the Commission is well positioned, given its expertise and experience as the guardian of the social development agenda.

The Commission focus on strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all during the two-year review and policy cycle for the 2017 and 2018 sessions,. Poverty is a challenge faced by the least developed countries, middle-income and developed countries alike; hence the review will cover all categories of countries. This expert meeting is organized to provide expert inputs to prepare for this important task. The outcomes of the meeting will provide important inputs to the Report of the Secretary-General on the priority theme by providing concrete, evidence-based reviews of poverty eradication strategies, highlighting those strategies that have been effective and those that have not and will draw lessons that will spur efforts to eradicate poverty within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

#### **II. Background**

Developing countries have made significant progress in reducing extreme poverty in the past two decades. Levels of poverty have dropped in all regions and more than one billion people have been lifted out of extreme poverty (measured as living on less than \$1.25 a day) since

1990<sup>1</sup>. More importantly, the world has met the target of cutting the global rate of extreme poverty to half its 1990 level, set out in the Millennium Development Goals. The proportion of undernourished people in the developing regions has also fallen by almost half since 1990, from 23.3 per cent in 1990-1992 to 12.9 per cent in 2014-2016.

Despite the enormous progress, the global level of poverty continues to be high — more than 836 million people were still living below the extreme poverty line in 2015. At the same time, progress remains uneven across regions and among countries. Progress was most impressive in Eastern Asia and Southern Asia, with China and India, the world's most populous countries, playing a central role in the global reduction of poverty. Between 1990 and 2015, the extreme poverty rate dropped from 61 per cent to only 4 per cent in 2015 in Eastern Asia and from 52 per cent to 17 per cent in Southern Asia. By contrast, the extreme poverty rate did not fall below its 1990 level (57 per cent) until after 2002 in sub-Saharan Africa and by 2015, 41 per cent of its population still lived in extreme poverty.

Gains in reducing extreme poverty are partly attributed to the significant progress in economic growth performance in the past two decades as well as gains in education and health, agricultural productivity, and the provision of social protection among other factors. However, in Africa and the Least Developed Countries, recent economic growth has not been associated with a significant decline in levels of poverty because it has not been inclusive enough and has not created adequate jobs to absorb new entrants in the labour market. In fact, the absolute number of poor people rose in these regions.

Moreover, high and widening inequality existing in many countries, including in many high-income countries, reduce the impact of economic growth on poverty reduction. Rising inequalities not only hamper the progress so far made in eradicating extreme poverty, but also potentially increase the number of people falling into poverty, in particular those who live just above the poverty line. The current situation of rising inequality is such that the subject of inequality appears throughout the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and many goals and targets of the Sustainable Development Goals are linked to inequality and inclusion. The 2030 Agenda discusses inequalities related not only to income but also to access and opportunity.

It has been widely recognized that adequately remunerated jobs provide a main pathway to moving out of poverty. However, recent trends indicate that employment growth is not sufficient to absorb the growing labour force<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, there has been a divergence between productivity and wage, as well as growing employment insecurity in both developed and developing countries, pushing people, especially those who are vulnerable, into non-standard and precarious jobs. About one-half of the global labour force is estimated to work in vulnerable jobs, often in the informal sector, which trap them in low-wage, low-skill jobs with poor working conditions without social protection, further limiting their chances to escape poverty. Mounting concerns over the labour market have generated a shift in the policy discourse to one that places a firm emphasis on decent work as an outcome of growth and means for achieving sustainable development. An important example of this shift is its inclusion in the recently

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations (2015). *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*.

<sup>2</sup> According to ILO, globally, 672 million jobs are needed to provide job opportunities for those who are currently unemployed (about 202 million) as well as for new entrants to labour markets (470 million between 2016 and 2030).

adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a goal (Goal 8), which aims to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which provides a global framework for shaping development cooperation for the next 15 years, also demonstrates the shift by linking finance and resource mobilization to the promotion of decent work. The Agenda acknowledges, prioritizes and mainstreams the decent work agenda throughout the outcome document.

To end poverty, countries should continue to prioritize tackling inequalities, expanding decent work and full employment opportunities for all; investing in human resource development; expanding the coverage of basic social protection; and promoting industrialization through structural transformation. Building peaceful and inclusive societies, strengthening governance and institutions and promoting the rule of law are also critical to achieving the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### **III. Objectives, Key Questions and Methodology**

The expert group meeting aims to review strategies that have been deployed in various countries to eradicate poverty. Taking into account that this is the review year for the two-year cycle, the meeting will focus on identifying concrete strategies that have proven to be successful in reducing poverty, building on the achievement made so far in the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action that was adopted at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995. The meeting will examine how these existing policies and strategies can further be strengthened to eradicate poverty within the context of the 2030 Agenda and identify potential strategies to address the root causes of poverty, exclusion and inequality in a more coherent and integrated manner to ensure that no one is left behind. A thorough examination of these strategies will facilitate the deliberations of the Commission for Social Development at its fifty-fifth session. Experts will have the opportunity to engage in open and inclusive discussions through the various sessions.

To accomplish these objectives, the meeting will bring together experts from academia, national governments, civil society, and the UN system. Presentations by the invited experts will focus on several key questions that include the following:

- i. What’s the policy implication of the commitment to eradicate poverty in all its forms?
- ii. What strategies have been successful, and what strategies have not been, at significantly reducing poverty? What are the factors that breed programme success? Do we need additional measures to eradicate poverty?
- iii. What forms of inequalities are more persistent than others and how can they be addressed in order to contribute to poverty eradication efforts?
- iv. To ensure that no one is left behind, what policies and strategies have proven to be effective, and what additional measure need to be taken?
- v. What are the biggest challenges for policy makers at the national level with respect to eradicating poverty and reducing inequality?
- vi. How important is financing to poverty eradication? Are the public resources being committed to these programmes sufficient? What innovative sources of financing can countries tap on to fight poverty?

The meeting will be a two and half day event that will allow a robust exchange of ideas and lessons learned that contribute to identifying concrete strategies to achieving the goal of poverty eradication and sustainable development for all. The interaction will foster the exploration of new ideas and strategies that could further strengthen the existing social and economic policies to eradicate the scourge of poverty.

#### **IV. Expected outputs**

The meeting will produce the following outputs:

- i. Substantive papers on the theme of the meeting, with concrete policy recommendations, prepared by experts;
- ii. A meeting report, summarizing the deliberations of the experts and the meeting key recommendations to be included in Secretary-General's Report to be submitted to the 71st session of the General Assembly.

#### **V. Organizational and administrative matters**

The Expert Group Meeting will be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York and is scheduled to take place from 1 to 3 June 2016.

About 15 experts will be identified and invited by the Division for Social Policy and Development of UNDESA, taking into consideration gender and geographical balances. The Division will meet the costs related to the participation (travel and per diem) of all the invited experts from outside the United Nations system.

The Secretariat will provide a preliminary list of substantive issues that will be described in an annotated agenda of the expert group meeting. Prior to the meeting, the invited experts will be required to submit their short written papers (5-10 pages in length, in English) to the United Nations Secretariat by 23 May 2016. All papers and presentations should be sent to **Mr. Amson Sibanda (sibanda@un.org)**, with a copy to **Ms. Makiko Tagashira (tagashira@un.org)** and **Ms. Hantamalala Rafalimanana (rafalimanana@un.org)**. All invited experts are expected to arrive in New York on 31 May 2016 and to stay throughout the duration of the meeting.

In addition to the invited experts, the following will participate:

- i. Staff members of the Division for Social Policy and Development as organizers of the meeting and to provide administrative/logistical support;
- ii. Member States;
- iii. Representatives from the NGO Committee on Social Development; and
- iv. Representatives from the UN system;

All sessions of the meeting will be in plenary. The invited experts will present their papers which will be followed by interactive discussions. At the conclusion of the meeting, participants will adopt the major conclusions and recommendations of the meeting. A final report will be produced after the meeting.

## **VI. Documentation and the Language of the meeting**

The documentation of the meeting will be comprised of relevant publications, documents and materials related to the theme of the meeting, and will be made available on the web site to be created for the meeting. The expert papers will be posted on the web site.

The working language of the meeting will be English. Documentation for the meeting will be provided in English.