

**United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Division for Social Policy and Development
Social Perspective on Development Branch**

Expert Group Meeting

**Policies to Advance Social Integration
Convened in Preparation for the 48th session of the Commission for Social
Development**

United Nations Headquarters, New York, 2-4 November 2009

DRAFT AIDE MEMOIRE

I. BACKGROUND

The Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is organizing an expert group meeting on “policies to advance social integration” from 2 to 4 November 2009 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The meeting is convened in the context of Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/19 in which the Economic and Social Council decided that the priority theme for the 2009-2010 review and policy cycle of the Commission for Social Development should be “social integration”, taking into account its relationship with poverty eradication and full employment and decent work for all. The outcomes of this expert group meeting will provide important inputs to the work of the Commission.

At the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD), held in Copenhagen in 1995, world leaders committed themselves to achieving the goals of poverty eradication, expansion of productive employment and promotion of social integration. In the Copenhagen Declaration, heads of State and Government committed themselves to “promoting social integration by fostering societies that are stable, safe and just and that are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights, as well as on non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security, and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons”.

Poverty eradication, full employment and decent work and social integration are interrelated, and mutually reinforcing. Accordingly, the focus of this meeting will be on poverty eradication and the promotion of full employment and decent work as viewed through the lens of social integration.

Poverty can be both the cause and the consequence of social exclusion. As poverty has multiple and interlinked causes, there is a need for more comprehensive social policies to create coherence among targeted programmes. The social integration of

people living in poverty should encompass meeting basic human needs, including nutrition, health, water and sanitation, housing and access to education and employment, through integrated development strategies. At the same time, empowering people living in poverty to be involved in the planning, design, implementation and monitoring of poverty reduction strategies and programmes, is critical.

Ensuring equal access to decent employment opportunities is a key component of social integration; thus it is important to ensure that the benefits of economic growth reach everyone in society. Moreover, the right to work, rights at work, access to social protection and social dialogue – which are the basic elements of decent work – should be available to all. Full employment and decent work provide a pathway out of poverty and create a channel towards the social inclusion of marginalized groups, including young people, women, indigenous peoples, migrants and persons with disabilities, and will thus lead to stronger social cohesion and to realizing the vision laid out in the Copenhagen Declaration.

II. OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the meeting is to arrive at a set of recommendations that will assist the Commission for Social Development as it deliberates on a policy outcome on social integration and its linkages with the goals of eradicating poverty and promoting full employment and decent work for all. Another purpose of the meeting is to contribute to the Report of the Secretary-General to be submitted to the 48th session of the Commission for Social Development on the priority theme of social integration.

The meeting will allow for an interchange of ideas among independent experts, representatives from United Nations Regional Commissions and observers from the United Nations system and civil society on strategies for social integration in the context of poverty eradication and promotion of full employment. This interaction is intended to stimulate thinking on how to incorporate social integration policies and principles into broader poverty eradication and employment policies. At the same time, participants will explore how efforts to eradicate poverty and promote full employment and decent work can help to advance social integration, particularly of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable persons and groups in society.

Specifically, the meeting will attempt to find answers to the following questions:

1. In what ways are social integration, poverty eradication and the promotion of full employment and decent work interrelated and mutually reinforcing?
2. How does social exclusion contribute to poverty and unemployment?
3. From the point of view of social integration, what are the pros and cons of pursuing targeted versus universal approaches to poverty eradication and employment promotion?
4. How are social protection programmes vital to achieving social integration, poverty eradication and employment goals? What are some of the ways in

which social protection measures can be structured to enhance the social integration of vulnerable and marginalized groups and persons?

5. What are some innovative ways in which social integration policies and practices have helped to achieve poverty eradication and the promotion of full employment and decent work?
6. How can efforts to achieve poverty eradication and full employment and decent work help to advance social integration, particularly of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable members of society?
7. What efforts can be taken to ensure that policies to promote poverty eradication and productive employment and decent work are non-discriminatory and rights-based, provide for equality of opportunity, and facilitate the participation of all people in their formulation and outcomes, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons?

III. ORGANIZATION OF EXPERT GROUP MEETING

A. Date and venue of the meeting

The expert group meeting is scheduled to take place from 2 to 4 November 2009 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The meeting will be organized by the Social Perspective on Development Branch, Division for Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat.

B. Organizational set-up of the meeting

About 12 experts, identified and invited by the Division for Social Policy and Development, are expected to attend the meeting. Representatives from international organizations, United Nations Regional Commissions and other parts of the United Nations system are also invited. The Secretariat will provide a preliminary list of substantive issues to be explored in an annotated agenda of the expert group meeting. Prior to the meeting, experts are required to submit written papers (in English) to the United Nations Secretariat by 22 October 2009. Participants are expected to arrive on 1 November 2009 and stay throughout the duration of the meeting. The participants will meet in 7 working sessions.

- Each session will have presentations by experts (maximum 10 minutes each) which will introduce the topic and provide context for the ensuing discussion.
- A rapporteur for each session will lead the group discussions and be responsible for writing the summary of proceedings.
- Brainstorming will be the preferred method of work and no formal conference-style presentations are envisioned.
- The working language of the meeting will be English. There will be no interpretation provided.

Wednesday, 4 November 2009

- Morning*
- VI. *Developing recommendations on social integration as they relate to poverty eradication and the promotion of full employment and decent work*
 - VII. *Wrap-up and conclusions and recommendations*