United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Division for Social Policy and Development
In collaboration with the Government of Finland

Expert Group Meeting

"Promoting Social Integration"

Convened in preparation for the 47th session of the Commission for Social Development

8-10 July 2008, Helsinki, Finland

Draft Aide Memoire

1. Purpose of the meeting

The Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) is organizing, in collaboration with the Government of Finland, an Expert Group Meeting on "Promoting Social Integration" from 8 to 10 July, 2008, in Helsinki, Finland. The meeting is convened in the context of resolution E/CN.5 /2008/L.6, adopted by the Commission for Social Development (CSocD) at its forty-sixth session, wherein the Commission established "Social Integration" as the priority theme for the 2009-2010 review and policy cycle, taking into account its relationship with poverty eradication and full employment and decent work for all, and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the priority theme to its 47th session in February 2009. The purpose of the Expert Group Meeting is to provide the CSocD with an independent expert opinion on the priority theme, and inputs into the draft recommendation for the forthcoming Report of the Secretary-General.

2. Background: justification and basic concepts

The World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) held in Copenhagen in 1995, established the notion of an inclusive society—a society for all—as one of the key goals of social development. The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, a key outcome of the Summit, pledged to make the eradication of poverty, full employment and social integration overriding objectives of development.   The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action contains a specific commitment to promote social integration by fostering societies that are stable, safe, just and tolerant, and respect diversity, equality of opportunity and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons.

Achieving an inclusive society is a goal with broad societal appeal as it aims at providing equality of opportunities to all, irrespective of race, gender, class, generation, ethnicity, cultural background, political and religious beliefs.

One of the key challenges facing policy makers and social scientists regarding social inclusion is how to remove the concept from the utopian realm of a "perfectly inclusive" world vision, and promote an inspirational yet realistic set of policy measures geared towards a "society for all." It is even more difficult to advance to recognizing the dignity of each person, not only as an ethical norm and moral imperative, but also as a legal principle, and promote civic engagement and participation.

The notion of social inclusion is regarded by some as a broader notion compared to social integration, one that actually improves and enhances access to channels for

social integration. At the same time as a policy goal, social inclusion is often more easily accepted compared to social integration—not all groups in society are eager to be "integrated" but all groups strive to be included.

In many societies, traditional demands for greater social inclusion and well-being have been joined by demands for the recognition of diversity and identity. A sense of community is often one of the most obvious in this regard. In some societies, cohesion may exist within a community while at the same time, paradoxically, the structure of society at large may be jeopardized or coming apart. Some groups may be very cohesive with strong ties binding individuals to the community and collective values that enjoy wide acceptance. Indigenous peoples are one such example.

In practical terms the idea of cohesion is often contrasted with the corrosion of a nation state's legitimacy and governance, widening social gaps and the emergence of different identities. As demonstrated by practices implemented in the European Union, agreements on social cohesion primarily translate into a broad set of policies and indicators focused on narrowing the income gap and ensuring greater access to employment, education and healthcare. In a certain sense social cohesion is a reflection of the historically significant intrinsic relationship between social inclusion and the provisions of mechanisms for integration and full membership in society. In this sense, social cohesion can be seen as providing a link between integration and welfare mechanisms and an individual sense of belonging to society. "Inclusion and belonging or equality and belonging are a pivot around which the idea of social cohesion in welfare

state societies has revolved" (For details please refer to: *Social cohesion, inclusion and a sense of belonging in Latin America and the Caribbean,* ECLAC, 2007). In this sense the notion of social cohesion refers both to the efficacy of established social inclusion mechanisms and to the behaviour and values of the members of society. Such mechanisms include employment, education systems, entitlements to rights and policies for promoting equity, well-being and social protection. A sense of belonging to society is a pivotal component in this regard. But it is ultimately a very subjective factor consisting of the perceptions, value judgments and attitudes of the members of society.

It is widely recognized that the nature of inclusion is multi-dimensional. Social inclusion does not belong to only one policy area and it is not possible to promote inclusive societies acting in separate sectors. Changes in one area quite often affect other areas.

A contemporary understanding of citizenship is increasingly being based on principles of inclusiveness, participation and active involvement. In this sense dynamic citizenship entails participation in political, social and economic affairs through the mobilization of tangible and intangible resources. The aim is to transform informal rights into legitimate rights and to translate the potential of citizens and resources into effective action, along with the transformation of political, social and economic environments at the macro and micro level.

There is a substantial variation from country to country in groups that are subject to exclusion. Women, people living in poverty, persons with disabilities, children, youth and older persons are particularly vulnerable to being socially excluded. In many countries, social cohesion is threatened by social tensions or institutional biases that exclude people with different ethnic, religious or cultural backgrounds. Recent migrants are also often excluded by local communities or society at large.

Social groups with particular disadvantages and vulnerabilities and groups that are discriminated against and/or marginalized are the natural, though not sole, beneficiaries of inclusive policies. In a certain sense every individual and member of society gains from a more inclusive society that encourages and promotes individual development and supports empowerment. Inclusive participation is quintessentially a bottom-up process where action is undertaken by citizens. It enhances the quality, credibility and most importantly, ownership of the decisions taken. That is why the inclusive society or "society for all" is not only an abstract notion but also a very practical policy goal.

Interactions with poverty eradication, full employment and decent work for all

Poverty interacts with social exclusion in important ways and it has been recognized as the key challenge of our time. Although the United Nations, through the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, has generated enormous political momentum that has created favorable conditions to improve the well-being of millions of people living in poverty, the experience of many countries is not encouraging. Poverty,

inequality and social exclusion remain widespread and rampant and are closely connected.

In many ways, inequality is one of the major impediments in creating "a society for all" to the extent that it reflects the exclusion of certain groups from the fruits of economic growth. Social cohesion is also challenged when economic growth and globalization produce asymmetric outcomes that benefit some greatly while leaving others woefully behind. Many forms of inequality result from pervasive social injustice. Indeed policies that address social inclusion and how to combat poverty and inequality in a comprehensive way, also achieve the goal of promoting social justice.

The exclusion of the weakest groups from the labour market and lack of gainful employment represents another threat to social inclusion and cohesion. The on-going transformations of labour markets, including growing flexibility, "casualization" and spreading informality of employment arrangements, not only exacerbate insecurity in society but also weaken social and class identities associated with employment and work. Further, where globalization has resulted in social and cultural dislocation, lack of effective social policies at the national and local levels often lead to undesirable outcomes, including social polarization and fragmentation. As a result some other social bonds and identities, e.g. those based on ethnicity, culture or religion, may gain in importance, creating policy challenges that require a new set of policies and approaches. The major socio-economic and political challenge of climate change has emerged as an additional incentive for promoting inclusive policies in the context of mitigation and locally driven adaptation and supporting fragile ecosystems, particularly in the developing world.

The foundations and challenges of inclusive policy-making

Policies that are based on principles of tolerance, empowerment and social justice provide better opportunities for the development of an informed and concerned citizenry. The building blocks of social inclusion, such as participation and social justice, allow for the meaningful and effective engagement of all members of society in shaping a shared future where every person, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play. Inclusive policies based on shared values and shared concerns may encompass interventions in different domains of society, from the social and economic to educational and cultural; these broad-based interventions may facilitate the implementation of an inclusive policy process.

The achievement of social inclusion also requires the commitment and the joint action of national legislative and executive branches, as well as all concerned entities within the executive branch. In the absence of this, meaningful action may be difficult, if not impossible. Thus it is essential to create the legal regulatory and policy frameworks that promote social inclusion and lessen exclusion.

One example of a positive development in the area of social inclusion is the recent adoption by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2006 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that is to become legally binding on May 3rd 2008. Other examples include recent decisions by many governments to undertake specific measures to integrate migrants and the adoption of the Declaration of the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in September 2007 which underscores the inherent value of human diversity and demonstrates the strengths of the global indigenous movement. However, these positive developments are often hampered

by the lack of mechanisms to implement new laws. The effective implementation of new laws is a major challenge of national legislatures to move from words to deeds and it is a main challenge for national public service to implement these laws in a transparent, democratic and consistent manner.

Important lessons for policy makers and all other stakeholders could be drawn from the analysis of the implementation process of two key normative documents of the United Nations related to socio-demographic groups such as youth and older persons, respectively, the World Programme of Action for Youth and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. Both documents are based on the philosophy of social inclusion, participation and empowerment, providing a blueprint for national action and international support in respective areas.

Discrimination related to various factors remains a persistent stumbling block on the road towards an inclusive society. As it is well recognized the main international human rights agreements all promote measures to tackle discrimination. Domestic legislation is produced to protect and guarantee those rights at the national and local levels. There is also an issue of social rights which is a necessary factor in the context of participation and inclusion. A rights-based approach to social policy that has been advocated entails the definition and widespread communication of rights, entitlements and standards which enable citizens to hold public policymakers or service providers to account for the delivery of social policies. The availability of mechanisms of redress, which citizens can utilize, is another crucial benchmark in this context. These mechanisms enable citizens to enjoy specified entitlements or established social minimums. Social guarantee frameworks are an innovative approach to integrate a rights-

based perspective into social policy. The social guarantees approach moves beyond a purely normative framework to give concrete meaning to economic, cultural and social rights, and therefore allows for making them operational, leading to domestic policies and programmes that promote social protection and social inclusion.

It is quite obvious that addressing the costs of inclusion requires specific policy measures and may be quite high. Often, interventions are assessed with limited information and without consideration of broader ramifications that can generate unintended social consequences, including social exclusion and missed opportunities. When this happens the social efficiency of such interventions is negative and can lead to a high cost in society as a whole, reflected in social conflict, violence and societal divisions. While the financial costs of inclusive policies across various sectors should be recognized as a substantial policy challenge (that could be addressed through appropriate budget allocations, including "social budgeting" techniques) inclusion may be a true benchmark in the context of sustainable development. Investment in policies that motivate participation in all sectors of society may be considered an investment in a successful and sustainable future and a more balanced society, meeting the needs of all citizens. Inclusion in many ways promotes and enhances a "win-win" vision where investment in inclusion and the resulting change in society is beneficial for all members of society.

Insecurity that exists in society regarding jobs, health, education, lack of trust in government and fear of crime, may generate more exclusion. One practical issue is how to lower the threshold of fear in societies. The process and reproduction of fear may perpetuate divisions and reinforce historical traumas. This is particularly significant in

post-conflict societies where the importance of participatory dialogue and inclusive policy has been paramount. (For more details, see: *Participatory Dialogue: Towards a Stable, Safe and Just Society for All,* UN/DESA, 2007).

The quest for equity has been on the agenda of many countries for decades, if not centuries. Understanding how the dimensions of inclusion are structured and realizing its diverse nature in practice is crucial. In many ways social inclusion is vital for society. In a number of European Union countries, social inclusion has become a priority in recent years, and the broadness and multi-dimensional nature of this concept is widely recognized. For example, increasing labour market participation by expanding active policies and ensuring a better linkage between social protection, education and lifelong learning have been recognized as essential in achieving inclusive and socially coherent society.

Achieving visibility in society for all members who are excluded for one reason or another is clearly a significant challenge for inclusive policies. But when specific concerns of individuals and social groups are taken out of the shadows and negative practices and existing obstacles for inclusion are highlighted and widely discussed, it becomes possible to address the challenges in a transparent and more effective manner.

Approaches to achieving inclusiveness

Awareness of the need for inclusiveness arises from education, advocacy, and the media, backed by an increased level of research and facilitation. Marginalized groups of people, including cultural minorities, should be identified and invited to participate in dialogues with political and social institutions regarding their specific realities and

challenges of their everyday existence. That visibility thus becomes a prerequisite for policy formulation and subsequent policy action. When basic agreements are achieved and the plank for inclusion goes further up, the existing documents, agreements and laws may be rewritten in a more inclusive manner.

The dichotomy of drastic change in policy versus incremental changes should also be recognized. Social integration/inclusion by definition is a long-term process and it is hardly possible to achieve it outright; in this sense, inclusive policies require consistency and patience. One solution in this complex domain may be to mainstream the concept of social integration/inclusion across sectors. Sometimes changes made incrementally may be slight but they may have a very significant effect in the longer run. The concept of mainstreaming social integration/inclusion should be approached as a positive development tool essential for the creation of "a society for all".

On a national level, it is highly desirable to establish effective monitoring of progress towards social integration/inclusion. There are no clear cut answers how to do it in a better way as these answers are often country specific. There is a need for a clear vision regarding *what* we intend to measure in the field of social integration/inclusion and *how* to measure it. There is also an issue of capacity development including developing statistical capacity and using appropriate indicators. There is a need of developing not only social *exclusion* indicators but also indicators of social *inclusion.*

Social cohesion is fundamentally important for societies and is crucial in the context of social inclusion and integration. Social cohesion is a major objective and pillar of successful, prosperous and peaceful societies. Social cohesion could be defined in many ways; one of many possible definitions is capacity of societies (of people and social

groups) to embrace collective norms, common values and modes of behaviour such as confidence in institutions of society, a sense of belonging and solidarity, inclusion, civic coexistence, and willingness to participate in deliberative exercises and collective undertakings. In a certain sense, social cohesion may be seen as an interaction between established mechanisms of social inclusion and citizens perceptions and responses. Social cohesion may be considered as both an end and a means. As an end, it is a social policy objective since inclusive policies seek to ensure that all members of society feel that they are an active part of it and that they are both contributing to and benefiting from its progress.

Dealing with matters of social exclusion, one cannot ignore the social costs of globalization, trends in international trade, investment flows, the evolution of domestic markets and labour market developments. All of the above have a definite impact on the social inclusion agenda. Similarly demographic trends, changes in the family structure and migration have an influence on social cohesion. There are questions on how social inclusion could better support efforts to ensure access and development with equity. One has to answer the questions that ask what lessons are learned after decades of poverty reduction efforts and policies largely based on market interventions and targeted programmes, conceived and articulated by Government representatives in collaboration with international financial organizations and foreign donors. There is an additional question, which asks whether active participation on then part of beneficiaries and the existence of assessment tools increase the effectiveness of outcomes.

3. Objectives and methodology

The main objectives of the expert group meeting are to explore how societies could become more inclusive, what are the priorities in different national contexts, and what capacity-building tools in this regard could be recommended to policy makers. The exploration of the meaning of social inclusion vis-à-vis social integration, the evolution of various approaches since the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995, as well as ways and means of promoting social inclusion represent another set of objectives. In the context of analysis of institutional settings and the practical significance of the concepts of social inclusion, social cohesion and social integration, the experts will review contemporary policies, case studies and existing approaches, mainly at the local and community levels, including such policy pathways as mandating through legislation. The ultimate purpose is to clarify definitions, identify interrelationships and suggest policy measures and operational tools geared at promoting social inclusion by all stakeholders, including both public authorities and civil society.

4. Expected Outputs

(a) 7-10 page analytical paper (single space) prepared and submitted by each expert before the expert group meeting. Individual papers should focus on one or more aspects included in the annotated agenda, explain its relevance, provide quantitative and qualitative evidence, analyze the roles of social institutions, and summarize conclusions and policy recommendations. As much as possible, an emphasis should be placed on proposed policy action.

(b) Policy recommendations suggested by the invited experts and based on the results of the discussions.

(c) Report of the meeting. The results of the meeting will be incorporated into the outcome report that will be used as a basis for the forthcoming report of the Secretary General to be presented to the 47th session of the Commission for Social Development scheduled to take place in Feb. 2009.

5. <u>Organizational and Administrative Matters</u>

The EGM will be organized by the Division for Social Policy and Development in cooperation with the government of Finland. The meeting is scheduled to take place from 8-10 July 2008 at the Baltic Centre in Helsinki.

The number of participants will be approximately 18. The experts will be identified and invited by the Division for Social Policy and Development. Representatives from international organizations, UN departments and agencies will also be invited. Participants are expected to arrive on 7th July and stay through the duration of the meeting.

The participants are scheduled to meet in 9 working sessions. Brainstorming will be the preferred method of work and no formal conference style presentations are envisioned. **The preparatory process, including preparation of written inputs, is crucial, and it is expected that the participants will submit their papers to the United Nations Secretariat by 23 June 2008**. The Secretariat will make available to the participants an analytical background study on the above subjects, as well as a preliminary list of substantive issues to be explored and identified in an annotated agenda of the EGM (please see the attachments).

The working language of the Meeting will be English. All submissions should be provided to the Secretariat in English.

6. Passports and Visas

Participants will be expected to make necessary arrangements for passports, visas and health certificates, if required, for travel. An information note will be sent out to participants at a later stage to assist in travel arrangements. All relevant correspondence should be addressed to Emma Dumalag dumalag@un.org, copy to Renata Kaczmarska kaczmarska@un.org.

Annex 1

Definitions

Social exclusion	The exclusion of individuals and groups from society's political, economic and/or societal processes on the grounds of physical, social, situational, lifestyle and/or behavioural characteristics, preventing their full participation in the life of society.

A process and a state causing the lack of access to full participation in mainstream society in economic, political, social and cultural terms. |
| Social inclusion | A process by which efforts are made to ensure equal opportunities for all, regardless of their background, so that they can achieve their full potential in life. Such efforts include policies, actions and other institutional arrangements that promote equal access to (public) services as well as enable citizen's participation in the decision-making processes, including civic, social, economic and political activities that affect their lives.
The term is often used to describe the process of combating social exclusion. |
| Social integration | The process of "fostering of 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." (Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, Commitment 4) "The aim of social integration is to create a society for all". (Programme of Action of the World Social Summit, para. 66)

It is also referred to as "the capacity of people to live together with full respect for the dignity of each individual, the common good, pluralism and diversity, non-violence and solidarity, as well as their ability to participate in social, cultural, economic and political life, encompasses |

all aspects of social development and all policies. It requires the protection of the weak, as well as the right to differ, to create and to innovate. It calls for a sound economic environment, as well as for cultures based on freedom and responsibility. It also calls for the full involvement of both the State and civil society." (Programme of Action of the World Social Summit, Introduction, para. 2)

Social integration is a dynamic and principled process in which societies engage to advance social development. The process aims at ensuring that society is accepting of all people (and not an attempt to make people adjust to society).

Social cohesion	Capacity of people and social groups to embrace collective norms, common values and modes of behaviour such as confidence in institutions of society, a sense of belonging and solidarity, inclusion, civic coexistence, and willingness to participate in deliberative exercises and collective undertakings

"Capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimising disparities and avoiding polarisation. A cohesive society is a mutually supported community of free individuals pursuing these common goals by democratic means." (Council of Europe, A New Strategy for Social Cohesion 2004)

"A set of factors that foster a basic equilibrium among individuals in a society, as reflected in their degree of integration in economic, social, political and cultural terms."(Inter-American Development Bank, Social Cohesion in Latin America and the Caribbean, p. 2)

Social cohesion is mentioned once in WSS's Programme of Action in a chapter relating to violence and conflict. (para 69) |
| Social capital | "People's and social groups' capacity to embrace collective norms, to build and maintain networks and bonds of trust capable to reinforcing collective action and laying the foundations for reciprocal treatment that can then gradually |

spread to the whole of society." (ECLAC, Social Cohesion. Inclusion and a sense of belonging in Latin America and the Caribbean. Summary, p. 20)

"Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. Increasing evidence shows that <u>social cohesion</u> is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together." (World Bank)

Mainstreaming	A strategy for making concerns and experiences of excluded groups an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes, in all political, economic and social spheres so that inequality is not perpetuated.
Inclusive society	Society that over-rides differences of race, gender, class, generation, and geography, and ensures inclusion, equality of opportunity as well as capability of all citizens to determine an agreed set of social institutions that govern social interaction. "<u>A society for all</u>" is one "in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play. Such an <u>inclusive society</u> must be based on respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, cultural and religious diversity, social justice and the special needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, democratic participation and the rule of law." ("Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development", para. 66)

These definitions are to facilitate the reading of the EGM background documents only. They carry no legal weight and are not necessarily endorsed by the United Nations.