

Commission for Social Development

Fifty-sixth session, 29 January to 7 february 2018

Opening Statement by H.E. Nikulás Hannigan, Permanent Representative of Iceland to the United Nations and the Chair of the Commission for Social Development

29 January 2018

Honourable Ministers
Deputy Secretary-General
Her Excellency Marie Chatardová, President of ECOSOC
Under Secretary-General Mr. Liu,
Excellences, Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to open the fifty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development and to welcome all of you in my capacity as the Chair of the Commission.

This fifty-sixth session comes at a critical point in time.

The Commission is heavily seized with promoting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Given the breath of social development issues that are in front of this Commission, I am confident that the Commission is uniquely placed to make significant contributions to addressing the social dimensions of the 2030 Agenda.

The success of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development depends on empowering young people, persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous peoples, and families as rights-holders and agents of change.

This Commission is also mandated with following up the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development.

Both the 2030 Agenda and the World Summit for Social Development are committed to seeking lasting solutions eradicating the scourge of extreme poverty, creating full employment and decent work for all and building more inclusive societies.

Hence, our work constitutes the basic framework for the promotion of social development for all at the national and international levels.

The Commission is also tasked with promoting the continued global dialogue on social development issues, including new and emerging issues that have a bearing on the promise of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind.

Among the many pressing challenges we face is worsening inequality within and among nations. Inequality's resurgence should be a concern to all of us and this Commission should contribute to combating it.

According to the '*World Inequality Report 2018*', the top one percent in the world had twice as much income growth as the bottom half since 1980. Oxfam's new report, '*Reward Work*,

Not Wealth’ also reveals that the world's wealthiest one percent captured 82 percent of the wealth generated in 2017, while the bottom 50 percent or 3.7 billion people who make up the poorest half of the world saw no increase at all.

How can we fulfil the promise of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind in the face of such gross inequities?

Tackling such challenges will require effective social policies and strategies. This means creating decent jobs at a sufficient pace to absorb a growing labour force, increased investments in quality and accessible education and health, investments in agriculture and rural development, infrastructure and greater social protection schemes.

We also need adequate means of implementation from domestic resources, private sector investments and official development assistance.

In an increasingly globalized and inter-connected world, we must also ensure that the benefits of globalization are shared by all and that we effectively respond to the ongoing threats posed by climate change.

The Commission can make headway in these areas stop working in silos and redouble our efforts to integrate the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development.

Distinguished delegates,

We therefore have a responsibility to strengthen the social pillar of sustainable development.

I am therefore particularly pleased by the thematic focus of the high-level panel discussions we are having this week, beginning this afternoon with the high-level panel on the priority theme “*Strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all*”. This will be followed in the afternoon of Tuesday, 30 January with a high-level panel discussion on the emerging issue theme, “*Towards sustainable and resilient societies: innovation and inter-connectivity for social development*”, and then by a panel discussion in the morning of Wednesday, 31 January on the “*The third review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing*” and lastly, a panel discussion on the afternoon of the same day on “*Towards inclusive, resilient and sustainable development: an evidence-based approach to the mainstreaming of disability in the implementation , monitoring and evaluation of the Agenda 2030*”.

The Commission will also be seized with issues pertaining to the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa’s development and the situation of persons with disabilities, youth, older persons and the family.

The Commission will also hear a presentation by a civil society representative and a youth representative from the ECOSOC Youth Forum during the opening session. The Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake of Sri Lanka will also join us.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As this is the policy session in the two-year cycle of the Commission's work, the expected outcome of this session on the priority theme will be an action-oriented resolution.

Let us seize this opportunity and strengthen international cooperation in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, building upon the achievements of the the World Summit for Social Development and of the Millennium Development Goals and seeking to address their unfinished business in a coherent manner.

Let us also ensure that this year's resolution on the priority theme places a strong emphasis on social policies and strategies that have shown to be effective at eradicating poverty in all its forms everywhere, including extreme poverty.

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and gentlemen,

The work in front of us is important and challenging and I look forward to the active participation of all delegations, civil society organizations and the United Nations system in this important endeavour.

Let us move ahead with ambitious action to ensure that the programme of work of this Commission stays remain relevant going forward, and contributes effectively to the work of the Integration Segment of the Economic and Social Council and the High Level Political Forum

I am therefore looking forward to the Commission's deliberations and I intend to transmit the outcomes and policy recommendations of this session as inputs to ECOSOC in my capacity as the Chair of the Commission.

Thank you and I look forward to a very productive Commission.
