

Plenary remarks - CSocD 2019, NGO Committee

Thank you and good morning.

Mr. President, Madam Deputy Secretary General, distinguished delegates,

We gather at a time of growing dissatisfaction with the prevailing economic order. Signs of a fraying social fabric abound, regardless of cultural or national context. Longstanding institutions are straining in the face of a shifting world order.

In the midst of these transitions, growing proportions of humanity have seen their circumstances stagnate or decline.

In response, many governments implement various austerity measures or turn to the private sector to fill the gaps.

But it is precisely at these moments when the vital role of governments must come to the fore most strongly. A State's fiscal, wage, and social protection policies can significantly reduce inequality and promote social inclusion.

The NGO Committee for Social Development therefore commends the Commission for its choice of priority theme and has put forward a draft Civil Society Declaration which will be finalized at the Civil Society Forum on Friday to which you are all warmly invited.

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Distinguished colleagues,

As previous speakers have mentioned, we are able to articulate many of the symptoms of an ailing global order. But the root causes remain unspoken.

Opportunities today remain largely dependent on the happenstance of birth. But the reality of our equality in dignity and rights requires that such chance should no longer be determinative.

Multitudes are marginalized on the basis of their diverse identities. Millions have taken to the streets, seeking healthcare, education, and other forms of social justice to which the world agreed over 70 years ago and which were reaffirmed in Copenhagen.

Truly, there is much that should hurt the heart of any just observer.

Yet what was once a problem of scarcity - of food, of knowledge, of resources - has now become a question of ensuring that the benefits of advancement are shared by all. And the

NGO Committee is optimistic that this Commission, should it so choose, could become a leading center of learning about how inequality can be meaningfully reduced.

The ECOSOC functional commissions are meant to contribute to Agenda 2030. And this Commission would do well to focus on the social dimension of that agenda alongside one or two central Sustainable Development Goals.

From among the many with relevance to the Copenhagen Declaration, we suggest, once again, that SDG 10, with its critical focus on inequality, be at the heart of this Commission's deliberations.

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There are also elements of the Copenhagen Declaration which require greater attention than they are given in Agenda 2030. Foremost among these is social integration, as well as the related concept of social cohesion, which pairs inclusiveness with the willingness of members of a society to cooperate in order to prosper.

These are critical issues. Societies around the globe are being assailed by a crisis of identity, as groups struggle to define themselves, their place in the world, and how they should act. Permutations of "us" and "them" define identities ever more narrowly. Competing ideologies and power struggles multiply.

Yet increasing numbers—particularly the young—cry out for societies that are more unified, just, and civil. Drawing on these aspirations, which can be heard in all corners of the world, will bolster a sense of shared identity and common purpose which is vital to the contemporary development agenda.

Social cohesion is not solely an objective of development; it is a driver of it. and for this reason, the NGO Committee recommends that next year's priority theme include a focus on social cohesion.

Mr. Chair,

The conversation we are having takes place at a specific moment in history. Humanity today is struggling with the tension between a global order built on the interests of numerous constituent parts, and the reality that our collective destiny is bound together more profoundly than merely the sum of these parts.

What is required now is a vision of a world that genuinely reflects the oneness of humankind, in all its richness, diversity, and depth. The realization of such a vision will require, sooner or later, a historic feat of statesmanship from the leaders of the world.

Next year's milestones of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, and the 25th anniversaries of both the Beijing Platform for Action and the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development offer important moments for sober reflection.

Much work is still to be done.

Taking the needed steps forward will require ambition, dedication...and a recommitment to the spirit of selfless service that drew so many of us to the United Nations in the first place.

But summoning the common will of humanity is possible today in ways that were undreamt of in previous ages. And it is in this light that civil society stands ready to lend whatever assistance it can.

I thank you.