



**Statement by
International Council on Social Welfare**

**To
The 43rd Session of the United Nations
Commission for Social Development
High-Level Plenary Meeting**

**United Nations
New York**

14th February 2005

International Council on Social Welfare
C/O NIZW International Centre
P.O. Box 19152
3501 DD Utrecht
The Netherlands
Phone 31 30 2394 452
Fax 31 30 2306 540
icsws@icsw.org
www.icsw.org

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentleman. I make this statement on behalf of the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) which represents, through its members in over seventy countries, tens of thousands of civil society organisations. ICSW's members are involved in service provision and advocacy for social development, social welfare and social justice.

Poverty has become a major international agenda item but the response has been very unequal. The fixation on the dollar-a-day mantra of the Millennium Development Goals while being a worthwhile hook for the discussion of poverty is a limited and constricting concept of poverty. It reflects an economic bias and ignores the broader definition of poverty adopted by the World Summit on Social Development.

There are insidious factors that work against reducing poverty. Long term programmes to remove the causes of poverty suffer every time there is a crisis and resources are diverted.

The commitment in Copenhagen reaffirmed here, was to place the creation of employment at the centre of government policies. The Millennium Development Goals give little attention to employment with reference only to youth.

ICSW believes that the UN must maintain its commitment to social integration and social development. Despite social integration being a prominent component of the Copenhagen Declaration it has been omitted in later commitments at the UN.

ICSW seeks a renewed commitment to the Summit Declaration for "taxation systems that are fair, progressive and economically efficient". There has been little progress in this area. But it is pleasing to note that at the World Economic Forum the President of France advocated a form of international taxation.

ICSW seeks the cooperation of governments at national, regional and international level in furthering the participation of civil society in the path to social development. There is a very uneven evolution of civil society inclusion and involvement in democratic forms of government. Some regional groupings of governments have made provision for civil society involvement in their work but there is an undercurrent of exclusion of civil society by some governments. The proliferation of civil society organisations has not made it easy for governments to know who to work with. Without coherence by civil society, governments will take the easy alternative of involving academics and individuals from civil society rather than representatives of organisations that have taken great pain to be democratic and transparent.

The UN is the only global organisation with a broad responsibility and membership to provide a balanced framework to meet the challenges of economic and social development. ICSW remains committed to the strengthening of ECOSOC and the Commission. The World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization supported the strengthening of ECOSOC and improving policy coherence.

ICSW applauds and supports the Secretary General's comments to strengthen ECOSOC. This could include, as the Secretary General suggests, ECOSOC being "an ideal forum for regular meetings of finance and trade ministers responsible for labour and social policies in order to review policy coherence among them" ICSW would add that ECOSOC is also the ideal forum for ministers for income security and health with the same aim of reviewing policy coherence.