



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

**High-level panel discussion to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary
of the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995)**

48th session of the Commission for Social Development

United Nations Headquarters, New York, 3 February 2010

Background note

The 48th session of the Commission for Social Development will be convened in New York from 3 to 12 February 2010. The High-level panel discussion to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development will take place on Wednesday, 3 February from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm. The panel will focus on framing the way forward for the social development agenda in light of the mixed progress that has been made in achieving the 10 commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and new issues that have emerged.

The panel discussion will allow for an interchange of ideas among Members States, relevant United Nations agencies and civil society on strategies for how best to advance social development 15 years after the World Summit for Social Development. This interaction is intended to review advancement towards and renew commitments to achieving people-centred development. It is also intended to stimulate thinking on how to address the relationships between social development and emerging issues such as climate change and the economic crisis. At the same time, panellists will explore ways to expand the benefits of social development to all, particularly of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable persons and groups in society.

There have been both achievements and setbacks in social development over the past 15 years. In some areas, such as primary school enrolment and gender equality, significant progress has been documented, while advancements in other areas such as reducing poverty and inequality have been disappointing. While many new global instruments have been implemented in the area of social integration, progress has been elusive and difficult to measure. The global crises, including the food and fuel crises followed by the financial and economic crisis, are posing a major challenge to social development and have derailed progress in reducing unemployment. The impact of the crisis on financing for development at both the national and international levels is expected to be negative as government budgets shrink during economic recession. At the

same time, the need for social protection programmes increases; thus, the costs of maintaining these programmes go up. In addition, climate change is now recognized as the most daunting challenge to face mankind. Its impact on social development, if unabated, could be devastating. Finally, lack of progress towards social development goals such as poverty eradication leave societies highly vulnerable to the adverse consequences of natural disasters as evidenced by the recent earthquake in Haiti where poverty has exacerbated the tragic impact of the earthquake on the population.

(For more details, see the [full background note: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/csd/2010/documents/cop15backgroundlong.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/csd/2010/documents/cop15backgroundlong.pdf))

Suggested questions for discussion:

- ❖ Fifteen years after the World Summit for Social Development, how have we done so far in meeting the 10 commitments made at Copenhagen? To what extent are these commitments still relevant?
- ❖ Some areas of social development have not seen much advancement in the last 15 years. What are the reasons and what can be done to ensure commitments to these goals are fulfilled?
- ❖ The global social and economic context for social development has evolved since Copenhagen. New challenges have emerged. For example, what has been the impact of the economic crisis and climate change on social development and how can these impacts be mediated? How can we better assess the impact, given the weaknesses in existing data such as time-lag and poor coverage?
- ❖ How can adequate funding for social development be assured, particularly given the fiscal constraints created by the economic crisis? What actions can countries take to create an enabling environment for social development during these difficult economic times?
- ❖ Are social development goals being given priority in government planning strategies? If not, what can be done to ensure they receive appropriate attention, based on good practices as well as lessons learned?
- ❖ Finally, how can we ensure that mistakes of the past are not repeated as we frame the way forward for the social development agenda?