



**55th session of the Commission for Social Development
Closing Statement by the Chair
Mr. Philipp Charwath,
Deputy Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations**

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

After one and a half weeks of engaging and fruitful discussions we have reached the end of the 55th session of the Commission for Social Development.

During this session, we heard from numerous high-level representatives about what their governments or organizations are doing in order to ensure that all social groups are included in the development of their respective countries and that in their endeavor to eradicate poverty in all its forms truly “no one is left behind”. There are many good examples of what works in very different situations and there are lessons learnt about what not to do. I personally found, in particular, the three panel discussions very rich and thought-provoking.

I would like to take this opportunity to, once again, thank all the participants in the general debate and the panel discussions, the panelists and the moderators for their valuable contributions.

We talked – among others – about the concepts of relative v. absolute poverty and how we need to devote special attention to those at the very bottom of society. We discussed that in order for economic growth to be turned into pro-poor growth and to lead to social development, forceful policy interventions are necessary. Many speakers underscored the lack of adequate data and the need to shore up our efforts to gather disaggregated data for informed policy choices. It was underlined that the concern for social groups needs to be mainstreamed into all policy frameworks – means for ensuring this mainstreaming, such as a youth check of all envisioned legislative measures, were mentioned. Whatever we do in this field needs to not only take the views of those concerned into account, but also needs to actively involve them in decision making – “Nothing about us without us”. Numerous times, it was highlighted that – while direct financial handouts are often necessary – the ultimate goal of social policies should be empowerment. And whatever we do needs to be firmly based on the concept of human dignity. Finally, questions were raised to what extent the UN system itself gave the mainstreaming of the concerns of social groups the required attention? In the light of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda we will need to find effective answers in order to ensure truly inclusive development that leaves no one behind.

Based on my relatively short experience as Chair of this Commission I wonder, whether the Commission could not do even better in feeding this rich input into the broader work of the United Nations and how we can best make use of the abundance of information, experience

and lessons learned for effective policy guidance? As I mentioned in my opening remarks, the Commission aligned its priority theme for its 2017/18 cycle with the main theme of ECOSOC's 2017 session. The outcome of the 55th session consists of three resolutions on sub-topics and there are going to be chair's summaries of the panel discussions. However, I believe that we could have acquired more consolidated policy guidance on poverty reduction through social development. Furthermore, in 2018 the main theme of ECOSOC will be "From global to local: supporting sustainable and resilient societies in urban and rural communities." It is not obvious to me how the Commission's unchanged biannual priority theme can adequately respond to this challenge and thus I believe that as members of the Commission we should continue to reflect on ways how we can better align the work of the CSocD with that of the ECOSOC and the HLPF.

This question was also touched upon in the course of the very productive and constructive negotiations on the disability resolution when we were considering the question of a possible annual multi-stakeholder panel. However, Member States clearly voiced their view that the alignment of the work of the Commission with that of ECOSOC and the HLPF can and should not be addressed in any particular resolution on just one of the social groups that the Commission is dealing with, as this would risk creating an imbalance, leaving some of these groups with less attention than others. If we are to achieve an effective alignment - which as Chair I do believe is paramount in order to keep the Commission relevant - this needs to be addressed in a comprehensive way through the methods of work.

I am convinced that the more specific the topics the Commission deals with are, the more interest they will solicit among Member States, especially in capitals. This could help Member States decide on more tailored participation from capitals - where many different ministries follow the work of the Commission - in turn leading to more tailored outcomes which could effectively highlight the perspective of social development in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and beyond.

In my view, at the end of the day it boils down to the question of what Member States want to achieve through the Commission. We all need to take ownership of the Commission and try to contribute actively to the work of the ECOSOC and the HLPF, in line with their respective agendas and mandates, rather than engaging in recurrent patterns. The work of the Commission needs to be concrete and up-to-date and should not shy away from experimenting with new formats. The most recent policy documents should be the main framework for action, after all we want to influence the implementation of the current generation of policies. Maybe the Commission should even adopt one-off resolutions in order to stay relevant and up-to-date?

One thing, however, should not change: the constructive atmosphere which the Commission should be proud of. I, thus, want to use this opportunity to thank all of you for your constructive engagement and attitude during the past couple of weeks - this makes the work as Chair of the Commission a very pleasant one.

Distinguished delegates,

It has been an honor and a privilege to be your chair during this 55th session of the Commission for Social Development. I leave the Commission with the firm conviction that

there is still a lot of work to be done in order to ensure that questions of social development are adequately addressed in the course of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, both at the national and international levels.

I am convinced that Member States will show the necessary leadership and flexibility in order to ensure that the Commission can adapt its working methods and can continue to play its role in this endeavor. For my part, I pledge to continue to be available to guide the work of the Bureau in the period up to the selection of another representative from a WEOG Member State as chair of the 56th session of the Commission for Social Development.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank the Secretariat for their continuous support to me and the other members of the Bureau, in particular Ms. Sangeeta Sharma from DGACM as the Secretary of the Commission and Ms. Daniela Bas and her colleagues in UN-DESA who were involved in the preparations of the substantive work of the Commission.

A special word of thanks also goes to my wonderful fellow Bureau members: H.E. Mr. Lot Dzonzi of Malawi, Ms. Elisabeta David of Romania, Ms. Ana Sandoval-Espinola of Paraguay and Ms. Alanoud Al-Temimi of Qatar – it has been a real pleasure working with you.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you, distinguished delegates, for your support and cooperation and I kindly ask you all to extend your full support also to the Bureau of the 56th session of the Commission for Social Development.

Thank you all very much.