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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority theme: strategies for the eradication of poverty to
achieve sustainable development for all

Statement submitted by the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Casa Generalizia della Societa' del Sacro Cuore, Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Congregation of the Mission, Dominican Leadership Conference, Edmund Rice International Limited, Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary — Loreto Generalate, International Presentation Association, Passionists International, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

Statement

We welcome the theme of the 56th Session of the Commission for Social Development 'Strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all.' In particular, we wish to highlight that poverty and its eradication is political, multidimensional, and is at core a human rights issue, affecting peoples' civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Mr. Philip Alston, the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights asserts that 'Poverty is Political' in his report to the 3rd Committee on October 24, 2017.

The commitments of all Member States to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also affirms poverty as political in its 'plan of action for people, planet and prosperity' and resolves 'to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want, and to heal and secure our planet … pledging to leave no one behind.' The implementation of the 2030 Agenda is considered a pathway to the eradication of poverty, and to a life of dignity for all. It is a moral imperative, challenging us to recognize our common humanity, our shared responsibilities and the centrality of human dignity.

Further, numerous United Nations documents have stressed the interrelatedness of poverty, social exclusion and environmental degradation. His Holiness Pope Francis, in his address to the General Assembly of the United Nations on 25 September 2015, also highlighted that "The misuse and destruction of the environment are also accompanied by a relentless process of exclusion… Economic and social exclusion is a complete denial of human fraternity and a grave offense against human rights and the environment. The poorest are those who suffer most from such offenses, for three serious reasons: they are cast off by society, forced to live off what is discarded, and suffer unjustly from the abuse of the environment". The persistence of poverty is largely the result of political choices that have consciously been made by those in power.

Globally, within our networks, the experiences of people living in multidimensional poverty attest that effective and sustainable solutions towards the eradication of poverty within communities often come from the people who live this reality. They have knowledge, ideas, solutions and resilience, while at the same time experiencing exclusion, blame, humiliation, stigma and discrimination. Engaging people living in dehumanizing conditions is part of the solution, and governments have the duty to uphold all human rights and ensure equitable and just distribution and redistribution of resources, together with ensuring that policies are inclusive and fair.

Good practices from Latin America — WIEGO and ASMARE — show how the inclusion of people living in poverty as partners in development has been successful in addressing urban environmental crises, generating jobs, income, access to housing and health care, while at the same time developing small community-based enterprises and networks focused on the transformation of waste materials. The transformation of people living on the streets from being adversaries to partners in urban development has proved to be a win-win situation for both municipal administrators and garbage recyclers.

Implementation of National Floors of Social Protection (ILO Recommendation 202) is an action-orientated policy that if implemented would indeed be that transformative action 'to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality in a healthy environment.' (2030 Agenda) Universal, rights-

based social protection is the most sustainable and effective approach towards eradicating poverty, reducing inequalities, and building social inclusion.

For social protection systems, including floors, to be a sustainable strategy, they need to be universal, and inclusive of all people, ensuring the fulfilment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural human rights. They need to be grounded in a development model that ensures sustainability, facilitates community solidarity, and maximizes the opportunity for people in poverty to be fully engaged in the political policy-making process.

Social protection is not merely a prerequisite for economic development and sustainability. Social protection contributes to and enhances the dignity and wellbeing of persons and families. When the basic needs of peoples for a place to live, nourishing food, health, education and basic income are provided, this in turn develops personal potential, and contributes to the development of communities and society. Research shows that Social Protection Floors for all are financially and fiscally possible in most countries. What is required for their successful implementation is the political will to allocate the necessary resources within the budget.

Although we often look exclusively to economic solutions to ending poverty, some of the most significant drivers of poverty relate to corruption, climate change, and violence. These are blatant abuses of human rights. Systemic change is needed to ensure that poverty eradication is effective and permanent. Corruption is a major impediment towards ending poverty, resulting in inadequate services because of misappropriated funds, and increased costs to access existing basic services because of bribery.

Trade deals and investment agreements often restrict governments and limit policy space to make decisions that uphold international human rights obligations. For example, governments sometimes partner with profit-driven private corporations, privatizing public goods like water, failing in their obligations to guarantee the realization of human rights for all their people. Some public-private partnerships fail to uphold the people-centered values of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and favour corporate interests. There are examples around the world where land is grabbed from indigenous peoples for profit without their free, prior and informed consent, rendering them culturally impoverished, and without the land they protect, which provides for their basic human needs.

People living in poverty constitute the vast majority of those affected by environmental problems such as air pollution, access to clean energy, clean water, food, and sanitation. The 2017 Sustainable Development Goals Report indicates that 29% of the global population does not have access to a "safely managed" source of drinking water and 892 million people still practice open defecation. Access to nutritious food remains a serious challenge, with 793 million people undernourished.

The financialization of economies has been one of the strong drivers of inequality, marginalization, social exclusion and poverty. This can be evidenced in the privatization of housing and the growing number of individuals and families who have been rendered homeless through bank repossession of mortgaged homes, and the lack of provision of social housing. Much of the investment in recent years has benefited the mortgage market, but insufficient efforts are made to address housing shortages.

Good Shepherd International Foundation in its 2016 report indicates that positive project results and impact among marginalized and vulnerable people are attributed to the following elements: engaging people's participation, empowerment

towards leadership, providing access to basic human rights, and building capacity for livelihoods that are decent and support the family and local community. Last year, this happened in 30 countries affecting 32,863 people at a cost of $2.3 million. A quote from Graciela, a woman from Honduras, illustrates the change: "I am very proud of my achievements. I am happy to be a role model and offer support to other women in the community who want to start a micro-business."

In order to eradicate poverty and to achieve sustainable development for all, there must be decisive political will towards implementation of social and economic policies that drive inclusion, empowerment and reverence for the environment, founded on the principles of respect for human and environmental rights and the common good.

We recommend the following strategies towards real transformation:

- Commit to a people-centered, action-orientated strategy to uphold all human rights, including ensuring meaningful participation of affected communities at all levels of decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

- Implement national floors of social protection in line with ILO R.202, and commit to allocating the necessary resources in national budgets.

- Reform the current financial architecture to put the rights of people and the environment before corporate profit.

- Adopt a lens of "integral ecology" which fully takes into account political, social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development (Laudato Si #138). Doing this in a way that is socially inclusive, environmentally friendly, and economically viable is at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda.

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