



Aide-Mémoire

Expert Group Meeting on “Strategies for Eradicating Poverty to Achieve Sustainable Development for All”

United Nations Headquarters, New York
Conference Room A
8-11 May 2017

I. Purpose of the meeting

In its resolution E/CN.5/2016/L.4, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations decided that the priority theme for the 2017-2018 review and policy cycle of the Commission for Social Development would be “Strategies for Eradicating Poverty to Achieve Sustainable Development for All”. The expert group meeting is convened in the context of this resolution and in preparation for the fifth-sixth session of the Commission to be held in February 2018, which will produce a negotiated policy outcome (a resolution) on the priority theme.

The Commission for Social Development continues to prioritize and give prominence to the review and follow-up of the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development. Furthermore, the Commission will make a vital contribution to the follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by supporting the thematic reviews of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) on progress on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, including cross-cutting issues.

The meeting will build on the review of strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all held during the 55th session of the Commission. The outcomes of the meeting will contribute to the work of the Commission by providing expert guidance and key input for the preparation of the Report of the Secretary-General on the priority theme.

Further, the meeting will also contribute to the preparation of the comprehensive review on the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty mandated by the General Assembly resolution 71/241. This segment of the meeting will evaluate progress made over the past decade to eradicate poverty through employment creation.

II. Background

Recognizing that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda placed poverty eradication as an overarching objective to achieving sustainable development for all. By pledging to “leave no one behind” and “reach the furthest behind first”, the Agenda provides a

powerful vision of a shared prosperity and equal opportunities. It envisions an inclusive society where all people, regardless of their background, can fulfil their potential in life and lead decent, dignified and rewarding lives in a healthy environment. To this end, the 2030 Agenda aims to tackle poverty in a more coherent, holistic and integrated manner and by addressing its underlying systemic causes.

During the past decades, the world has made enormous progress in reducing poverty. The number of people living in extreme poverty (below \$1.90 per person per day) has declined from 1.85 billion in 1990 to 767 million, or 10.7 per cent of the global population in 2013¹. More importantly, the world has met the target of cutting the global rate of extreme poverty to half its 1990 level, set out in the Millennium Development Goals. The proportion of undernourished people in the developing regions has also fallen by almost half since 1990, from 23.3 per cent in 1990-1992 to 12.9 per cent in 2014-2016.

Despite overall achievements at the global level, progress remains uneven across regions, as well as among and within countries. In 2013, Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia together accounted for 84.1 per cent of the total number of those living in extreme poverty worldwide (50.7 per cent for SSA, and 33.4 per cent for South Asia, 9.3 per cent for Asia and the Pacific, 4.4 per cent for LAC, 1.4 per cent for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and, 0.8 per cent for the rest of the world)². About 439 million people, the largest number of the global poor, live in lower-middle income countries, compared to 258 million in low income countries. People living in extreme poverty are predominantly rural, young, poorly educated, and mostly employed in the agricultural sector. Even in the 41 most affluent countries, an estimated 77 million children lived in relative poverty in 2014. Strategies for eradicating poverty therefore should reflect varying national contexts and address the specific needs of those left behind, including disadvantaged and marginalized groups.

Making further progress in poverty eradication requires the understanding of and in-depth analysis on the impact of increasingly complex global mega trends and challenges, such as rapid urbanization, population growth, climate change, food and water scarcity, persistent and widening inequalities, fragilities of global economy, and growing job insecurities.

It has been well recognized among developed and developing countries alike, that economic growth, while necessary, needs to be inclusive and more equitable to reduce poverty. Development gains should reach the poorest of the poor, and create more decent jobs. Rising inequalities, however, not only hamper the progress so far made in eradicating poverty, but also potentially increase the number of people falling into poverty. Those who live just above the poverty line or are part of the working poor are particularly vulnerable. Reducing inequality is therefore considered to be critical to reducing poverty and achieving sustained, inclusive and equitable growth.

Another growing concern is inadequate access to decent jobs in many countries. The centrality of employment and decent jobs for poverty eradication is well recognized. However, recent trends indicate that employment growth is not sufficient to absorb the growing labour force, particularly in

¹ World Bank, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016: Taking on Inequality* (Washington, D.C., 2016)

² World Bank, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016: Taking on Inequality* (Washington, D.C., 2016)

those countries and regions with large and burgeoning youth populations³. Moreover, there has been a divergence between productivity and wages, as well as growing employment insecurity in both developed and developing countries, pushing people, especially young people and those who are vulnerable and marginalized, into non-standard and precarious jobs.

Further, merely having a job does not necessarily guarantee an escape from poverty. Many people living in poverty actually have a job. However, these are low-skilled, under or sometimes un-paid jobs often in the informal sector, without safe working conditions and adequate social protection, thus further limiting their chances to escape poverty traps. Even in developed countries, more than 80 per cent of the working poor are engaged in employment, but precarious forms of employment. For instance, while Europe's economy is finally recovering, more than half of all new jobs created in the European Union since 2010 have been through temporary contracts. As a result of the global financial and economic crisis, employers are wary of hiring permanent workers in a tenuous economy where growth is still weak.⁴

Building on lessons learned, policy makers need to devise new approaches and strategies that will effectively tackle poverty in all its dimensions in a changing global context. Strategies for eradicating poverty should ensure coherence and coordination among social, economic and environmental policies, and the sequencing of policy measures. An enabling global environment and enhanced partnerships are also essential. Strengthening human capacity through investing in education and health has been proven effective. Ensuring better access to clean drinking water and sanitation also significantly improves the well-being of people living in poverty, and enhances their opportunities to escape poverty traps. Further, expanding the coverage of basic social protection is an essential policy instruments to eradicate poverty and combat inequality.

Expanding decent job opportunities in the rural farm and non-farm economy and boosting agriculture productivity, in particular that of small-holder farmers, are also crucial to reducing poverty in many parts of the developing world. It is also necessary to enhance the skills of poor workers through vocational skills training and upgrading as well as improving the quality of vulnerable work. Furthermore, creating jobs in the blue economy and the green sector such as forest conservation and restoration, sustainable agriculture, water treatment and renewable energy in rural areas can increase income, reduce poverty and also redress the depletion of natural resources and environmental degradation.

III. Objectives, Key Questions and Methodology

The expert group meeting aims to make specific policy recommendations on effective strategies for eradicating poverty in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to evaluate the implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017). Given this is the policy year for the two-year cycle of the Commission for Social Development, the meeting will build on the outcomes of the 55th session of the Commission that reviewed strategies that countries have implemented to eradicate poverty. The meeting will seek to highlight innovative approaches and strategies that have proven to be successful in reducing

³ According to ILO, globally, 672 million jobs are needed to provide job opportunities for those who are currently unemployed (about 202 million) as well as for new entrants to labour markets (470 million between 2016 and 2030).

⁴ https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/09/business/europe-jobs-economy-youth-unemployment-millennials.html?_r=0

poverty at the global, regional and national levels. The meeting also aims to deepen the understanding of myriad challenges that impede progress in reducing poverty, and address their linkages with poverty eradication strategies. The meeting will also review institutional mechanisms that support coherent and coordinated implementation of poverty eradication strategies within the context of the 2030 Agenda.

All of the above will facilitate the deliberations of the Commission for Social Development at its fifty-sixth session as well as the 72nd session of the General Assembly. Experts will have the opportunity to engage in open and inclusive discussions through various sessions.

To accomplish these objectives, the meeting will bring together experts from academia, national governments, civil society, and the UN system. The first two days will be devoted to examining policies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all while the second segment of the EGM will be dedicated to reviewing the implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, including the UN system-wide Plan of Action on the Decade. The system-wide plan of action seeks to promote greater awareness about the decent work agenda as an effective development strategy element for poverty eradication, strengthen capacity building, share good practices in promoting employment and decent work at the national and international levels, and support the integration of decent work towards poverty eradication into national and international policies and programmes. Presentations by the invited experts will focus on several key questions that include the following:

- i. What kind of social and economic policies and activities have to be central to policy making and programmatic interventions in order to deliver on the new global agenda, particularly the overarching objective of poverty eradication?
- ii. What are the global and regional factors that continue to undermine progress in eradicating poverty?
- iii. What institutional setups or mechanisms are best suited at ensuring policy coherence and coordination to end poverty in all its forms, including extreme poverty, both at the international and national levels?
- iv. What are effective strategies to mobilize resources (both international and domestic) for eradicating poverty? What strategies were applied to identify innovative sources of financing to fight poverty?
- v. How have countries been addressing the challenge of youth unemployment and what kind of strategies have been implemented to give young people, including young women, everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work?
- vi. How effective have been policies and strategies adopted by countries to address structural constraints faced by women, youth, persons with disabilities, older persons and indigenous groups as economic agents and to remove barriers that prevent these groups from being full participants in the economy?
- vii. To what extent have relevant organizations of the United Nations system, within their respective mandates and resources, able to support countries in strengthening their social and macroeconomic policy capacity and national development strategies so as to contribute to achieving the objectives of the Second Decade?
- viii. What have been the main challenges, gaps, opportunities and collaborative actions facing the UN system in its attempt to foster system wide coherence in ensuring that

no one is left behind and no country is left behind in the implementation of the objectives of the Second UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017)?

The meeting will be a four day event that will allow a robust exchange of ideas and lessons learned that contribute to identifying concrete good practices, key policies and actions and next steps to accelerate progress towards eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions with the support of partners and funding.

IV. Expected outputs

The meeting will produce the following outputs:

- i. Substantive papers on the theme of the meeting, with concrete policy recommendations, prepared by experts;
- ii. A meeting report, summarizing the deliberations of the experts and key recommendations to be included in Secretary-General's Reports to be submitted to the 56th session of the Commission for Social Development and the 72nd session of the General Assembly.

V. Organizational and administrative matters

The Expert Group Meeting will be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York and is scheduled to take place from 8-11 May 2017.

About 12 - 15 experts will be identified and invited by the Division for Social Policy and Development of UNDESA, taking into consideration gender and geographical balances. The Division will meet the costs related to the participation (travel and per diem) of all the invited experts from outside the United Nations system.

The Secretariat will provide a preliminary list of substantive issues that will be described in an annotated agenda of the expert group meeting. Prior to the meeting, the invited experts will be required to submit their short written papers (5-10 pages in length, in English) to the United Nations Secretariat by 28 April 2017. All papers and presentations should be sent to **Ms. Meron Sherif** (sherif4@un.org), with a copy to **Ms. Makiko Tagashira** (tagashira@un.org) and **Mr. Amson Sibanda** (sibanda@un.org).

In addition to the invited experts, the following will participate:

- i. Staff members of the Division for Social Policy and Development as organizers of the meeting and to provide administrative/logistical support;
- ii. Member States;
- iii. Representatives from the NGO Committee on Social Development; and
- iv. Representatives from the UN system.

All sessions of the meeting will be in plenary. The invited experts will present their papers which will be followed by interactive discussions. At the conclusion of the meeting, participants will adopt the recommendations of the meeting. A final report will be produced after the meeting.

VI. Documentation and the Language of the meeting

The documentation of the meeting will be comprised of relevant publications, documents and materials related to the theme of the meeting, and will be made available on the web site to be created for the meeting. The expert papers will be posted on the web site.

The working language of the meeting will be English. Documentation for the meeting will be provided in English.