

Round Table 1 - "Strengthening the Three Pillars of Social Development: Poverty Eradication, Full and Productive Employment and Decent Work for All, and Social Inclusion."

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Distinguished Chair, Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen!

We stand today at a defining moment in human history. The world is not merely facing a crisis of poverty or employment; it is confronting a crisis of social justice. The three pillars of social development; poverty eradication, decent work, and social inclusion; must no longer be treated as separate policy domains. They are the moral, economic, and security foundations of our shared survival. Across the globe, the warning lights are flashing red. In the Sahel region alone, over 33 million people have been displaced by climate-related disasters. Temperatures there are rising 1.5 times faster than the global average, while over 40 million hectares of farmland have been degraded by desertification. These are not just environmental statistics; they are human tragedies.

When the earth can no longer feed its people, desperation follows. And where hope disappears, extremism, trafficking, and conflict thrive. In the Sahel, Lake Chad Basin, and Horn of Africa, young people are being recruited not because of ideology, but because they are hungry, unemployed, and invisible. We must therefore declare it unequivocally: Poverty is a global security threat. Unemployment is a form of social violence. Exclusion is a silent weapon of mass destruction. The erosion of decent work and social inclusion is also undermining democracy. In too many parts of the world, including Africa, we are witnessing a resurgence of coups, authoritarianism, and democratic fatigue. This is not accidental. When people lose faith in fairness, they lose faith in freedom.

Ghana's own experience offers a practical lesson. Our National Security Strategy (2021) identifies poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion as non-traditional security threats. Our Coordinated Programme for Economic and Social Development Policies and National Youth Policy have sought to transform inclusive employment and education into tools of peacebuilding and national resilience. At the grassroots, organizations like the Starlight Foundation Ghana embody this principle, empowering street-connected children, training marginalized youth, and restoring human dignity. They remind us that social development is human security made visible.

Excellencies, this is the new frontier of multilateralism. We can no longer secure nations without securing people.

We can no longer speak of peace while ignoring hunger.

We can no longer pursue growth that excludes the majority.

The way forward must therefore be bold:

- Integrate social policy with security policy, making inclusion and decent work core to preventive diplomacy.
- Expand digital literacy and green employment, giving our youth the tools to shape a sustainable future.
- Formalize and dignify the informal economy, where millions already create value without protection.
- Institutionalize social protection systems as part of every nation's resilience architecture.

The truth is simple but profound - no society is secure if its people are hungry, excluded, or unemployed.

Let this be the century in which we stop managing poverty and start dismantling it.

Let us be bold enough to see social development not as charity, but as global statecraft.

Excellencies, the world does not need more speeches, it needs conviction.

It does not need more declarations, it needs transformation.

Let us act not out of fear of instability, but out of faith in humanity.

Because in the end, peace is not built by armies; it is built by justice, inclusion, and hope.

Thank you.