

## **World Day of Social Justice**

### **Statement by the NGO Committee for Social Development Delivered by: Tahirih Naylor, Chair of the NGO Committee for Social Development, Representative of the Bahá'í International Community**

Chair, Excellencies, and friends of Social Justice,

On behalf of the NGO Committee for Social Development, I would like to express our sincere thanks to all Members States for their unanimous adoption of the resolution (A/RES/62/10) that established the World Day of Social Justice. In particular, I wish to recognise the leadership of the Government of Kyrgyzstan for proposing and bringing the idea of the World Day on Social Justice to fruition.

I would also like to acknowledge the support of the President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations for the World Day, as well as the UN's Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Office of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and our colleagues at Realising Rights and the Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) for eliciting the perspectives of NGOs in their work.

We look forward to continuing our collaborative and complementary work in pursuing the goals of social justice with the United Nations system and its Member States.

The NGO Committee is encouraged by the Member States commitment in creating the World Day of Social Justice based on the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action as well as the social development initiatives of the 24th Special Session of the UN General Assembly.

We welcome the dynamic nature of the World Day given to it by the Member States in devoting this special day to the promotion, at the national level, of concrete activities on social development. The civil society organisations globally stand ready to work with the Members States and the UN system to make Social Justice a reality.

As we have recently marked the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is encouraging that the World Day recognises that social development and social justice are indispensable for the achievement of the MDGs, of peace and security and necessitate the respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

However, it must be noted that the concept of social justice has not yet been further reviewed or elaborated by the United Nations. The NGO Committee on Social Development urgently calls for the Member States to work with the multi-stakeholders, many of whom have gathered at the UN for the Commission on Social Development, to undertake a more detailed and thorough examination of the moral and ethical imperative of social justice to help provide a better understanding of its parameters and challenges.

We strongly believe that this review and elaboration is essential if we are to be able to make social justice an integral part of our efforts to meet the internationally agreed development goals with a special focus on improving the lives of the vulnerable and those living in poverty.

In the absence of a more detailed analysis, we look to the main issues that have been given agency by the Copenhagen Declaration and the 24th Special Session of the UN General

Assembly, namely: social integration, poverty reduction and decent work for all; however, the resolution recognizes the need to further consolidate the efforts of the international community in poverty eradication and in promoting full employment and decent work, gender equality and access to social well-being and justice for all.

The Secretary-General, in his Report to the Commission this year, notes that social integration is “a process leading to the establishment of ‘a society for all’”. We concur with the Secretary-General in that “exclusion and destitution are contrary to the basic values of human dignity and human rights”.

The NGO Committee maintains that in order to create an inclusive society we must have respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The principles of economic, social, political, civil and cultural rights enshrined in universal human rights are one of the cornerstones of socially inclusive societies.

It is critical in building inclusive societies that we create conditions that allow all social groups and individuals to participate in the political, social, cultural and economic decision-making processes of society to improve their access to opportunities. All who are affected by decisions should participate in their development, implementation and evaluation. By widening opportunities and access to services, people have a greater chance to reach their full potential and contribute actively to society.

However, progress on social policy in general and on social impact analysis of policies promoting social integration, specifically has been lagging. We call upon the Member States to advance social integration through national strategies with measurable outcomes promoting growth and equity accompanied by fair and progressive tax systems and social protection mechanisms.

The NGO Committee is concerned by the continuing marginalization of those living in poverty, including migrant workers and other vulnerable groups, who are disproportionately excluded from the benefits of globalization. The opportunities available to them are severely limited and those who do find employment are often exploited or are relegated to low-paying jobs lacking basic labour rights or any form of social protection.

Since the global financial crisis most negatively effects the most marginalized peoples of the world, social justice demands that the interests of the peoples of all nations be considered in efforts to recover from the current recession and reform the economic system.

We encourage Member States to consider new efforts that will help those living in poverty to meet their basic human needs, including nutrition, health, water and sanitation, housing and access to education and employment. To this end, we support the efforts to develop regionally appropriate “social floor” minimum standards.

The challenge before us is to turn the forces of globalization to a new global ethic based on unity and diversity and the enjoyment of human rights for all. We need to move towards an integrated globalization where all people participate in shaping the decisions and structures which affect their lives, where all have enough to serve their own needs and all contribute to the well-being of others.