
To what aim must the 2025 Second World Summit for Social Development aspire? A Statement by the NGO Committee for Social Development

The 1995 World Summit for Social Development focused unprecedented international attention on the centrality and dignity of the human being within the development framework. From it sprang vital points of consensus not only around key pillars of eradicating poverty, expanding employment, and promoting social integration, but more broadly on social development itself, as a concept that is “central to the needs and aspirations of people throughout the world¹.” That initiative continues today, with the preparatory process leading to the Second World Summit for Social Development, to be held in Doha, Qatar, in November 2025. The NGO Committee for Social Development (NGO CSocD) expresses its gratitude to Belgium and Morocco, Co-facilitators of this process, for their commendable work and for heeding the calls of civil society for inclusive engagement and transparency. Civil society as a collective bears a longstanding history of meaningful engagement in UN social development processes. The NGO CSocD was founded in 1998, soon after Copenhagen, to work toward the achievement of the World Summit goals and to continue reviewing UN progress toward those goals, and is uniquely positioned to bridge the divide between the grassroots and the international. The NGO CSocD stands ready to support the Co-facilitators in this process.

The principles of social development are vital to the work of the multilateral system because they speak to every country’s most fundamental resource: its people. The elevation of human capacity—the personal capacities of individuals, the collective capacities of communities and societies, and the channeling of those capacities towards the common good—lies at the heart of social development.

The Secretary-General’s *Our Common Agenda* report called for a new vision fit for the twenty-first century. It also highlighted key issues that must be advanced at a second World Social Summit, including universal social protection floors, universal health coverage, adequate housing, education for all, and decent work. The NGO CSocD is eager for the Summit’s review of these key issues, the 10 Commitments laid out in the Copenhagen Declaration, and more widely, themes now at the forefront of consciousness that have emerged out of the evolving global circumstances which are equally vital to ensuring that progress leaves no one behind.

Tangible movement toward realizing such goals in practice must be the overarching aim and operating framework of the upcoming Summit. This could, for example, take the form of establishing a fund for social protection that would provide governments with financing to achieve SDG target 1.3 on establishing national social protection systems, or guaranteeing decent work with adequate remuneration, bringing to an end exploitative practices associated with child labour, unpaid care work, and informality. An equally critical function of the Summit is settling broad-based agreement on the notion that a new global social contract is in order, embedded in advancements made and learning accrued over the past 30 years. Present models of development, governance, and finance have demonstrated the limits of their ability to bring about social development to its fullest expression. New institutional structures and systems are needed, along with more appropriate norms and values to underpin them.

The Summit must therefore catalyze movement toward fundamental change—from models of development that focus on short-term solutions to ones that address deeper and enduring structural challenges; from ones that measure well-being solely based on financial considerations (eg. GDP), to ones that are grounded in the holistic dimensions of progress of environmental and social well-being and human rights; from ones that prioritize profit, to ones that prioritize justice, protection of the environment, social protection, decent work, labour rights, and tax justice; from ones that reward corruption and exploitative practices, to ones that center shared values, integrity, trustworthiness, and sustainability; from a focus on accumulation and wealth as the development goals, to ones that value well-being, participation, sufficiency, moderation, and equity; from ones that view so-called ‘beneficiaries’ as passive recipients of goods and services, to ones that recognize local populations as essential contributors of knowledge and partners toward development goals.

¹ [Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development](#)